

Jewish settlers wound Israeli policeman

HEBRON (AFP) — Stonethrowing Jewish settlers wounded an Israeli border policeman in the West Bank town of Hebron Saturday, an Israeli military official said. The policeman was wounded as he attempted to stop the settlers throwing stones at Arab houses in the centre of the divided town. The army said the incident happened after Palestinians threw a firecracker at a Jewish school in one of the settler enclaves in the heart of Hebron. The town, where 400 Jewish settlers live in small enclaves in the midst of more than 100,000 Palestinians, is the scene of frequent clashes between Palestinians, settlers and the Israeli security forces.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جورديان تايمز يومية سياسية ناصرية الجغرافية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية، الراي.

2 killed, 10 wounded in Luxor clashes

LUXOR (AFP) — Two villagers were killed and 10 others wounded in clashes between police and residents living amid the archaeological ruins of Luxor as the authorities tried to force them to relocate, police said. A large number of policemen had massed Saturday morning to move the residents of Gurna, a village on the western bank of the southern tourist resort of Luxor, police said. Police also made a number of arrests, according to witnesses.

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Iraqi president threatens setting ultimatum for U.N. inspections

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraqi President Saddam Hussein threatened Saturday to give U.N. arms inspectors a six-month ultimatum to leave Baghdad, and scoffed at U.S. warnings of a military strike against Iraq.

"If the [U.N.] Security Council does not carry out its commitments towards Iraq... Iraq will firmly support the recommendations of the National Assembly," President Saddam warned in a televised address to mark the seventh anniversary of the start of the Gulf war.

"There is no way out and no alternative course," President Saddam said. He was referring to a recommendation by the Iraqi parliament on Nov. 27 to give the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) six months to wind up its disarmament work.

Iraq has been under crippling U.N. sanctions since its August 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

Under the terms of the ceasefire ending the Gulf war that ejected Iraqi forces from the emirate in February 1991, the embargo cannot be lifted until UNSCOM certifies the elimination of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.

"The people and leadership of Iraq... are determined to fight a great jihad [holy war] to bring about the lifting of the embargo," said President Saddam, who wore the Baath Party military uniform and punctuated his speech with verses from the Koran.

And he warned the United States not to resort to military action to impose its will, an option that has not been ruled out by White House officials in recent days.

"They should not deceive themselves yet again and imagine that what they have failed to accomplish through



Iraqi protesters burn the U.S. flag during a march through Baghdad early Saturday to mark the seventh anniversary of the start of the Gulf war (AFP photo)

cheating and lies can now be attained by military aggression," he said.

President Saddam's warning comes as Iraq is involved in a new crisis with UNSCOM, whose chairman Richard Butler is expected for emergency talks in Baghdad on Monday.

Already embroiled in a row over its refusal to open presidential palaces to UNSCOM inspectors, Iraq last week blocked the work of an UNSCOM team led by former U.S. Marine Scott Ritter whom Baghdad accuses of spying for Washington. Iraq says UNSCOM is dominated by Britain and the United States, the two Security Council members most opposed to the lifting of sanctions, and has welcomed Russian and French proposals to alter the make-up

of UNSCOM.

U.S. Defence Secretary William Cohen initially rejected a Russian offer to provide surveillance planes to UNSCOM as an alternative to the American U-2, which Iraq says is used by Washington to spy on Iraqi military sites.

But speaking to reporters in Bangkok Saturday Mr. Cohen appeared to soften his stance, saying other nations could help with U.N. aerial reconnaissance as long as the U.S. role was not diminished.

"We certainly have no objection to other countries helping to supplement the United States' U-2, or indeed inspectors, providing there is no effort or consequence of undermining or degrading in any way the U.S. participation," he said.

Mr. Cohen Friday had also objected to proposals to change the composition of UNSCOM teams by adding Russian, French and Chinese arms experts.

Since a crisis erupted in October over arms inspections and Iraq expelled U.S. nationals in UNSCOM for a week, the United States has massed air and naval forces in the Gulf.

Washington now has more than 26,000 soldiers in the Gulf region, more than 320 planes and two aircraft carriers. And Britain on Friday ordered its aircraft carrier HMS Invincible to the Gulf from the Mediterranean.

Around 300 Iraqis held a protest in Baghdad at 2 a.m. Saturday, the time when the war over Kuwait started on Jan. 17, 1991 with air raids on Baghdad.

Some burned effigies of U.S. President Bill Clinton, along with U.S. and British flags, and chanted slogans calling for a lifting of the embargo.

President Saddam said that Iraq "held steadfast" against the U.S.-led coalition in the Gulf war, which Baghdad dubbed the "Mother of All Battles." For the United States and its allies, Jan. 17 was "a day of shame," he said, as the civil defence in Baghdad tested the capital's air raid sirens to mark the anniversary.

President Saddam also renewed calls in his 50-minute speech for Arab unity and support for Iraq's campaign to lift sanctions.

"They [the Arabs] are renewing confidence in the nation, not only by showing understanding over the position of Iraq but also by supporting efforts to have the unjust embargo lifted," he said.

Prince Hassan calls for more effort to eliminate obstacles hindering peace

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan on Saturday called for more efforts to transcend all obstacles facing the progress of the peace process and to overcome Islamophobia.

During a meeting with a U.S. Congress delegation, Prince Hassan pointed to the efforts exerted by Jordan to achieve economic development and combat poverty and unemployment.

Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali also received the Congress delegation and reviewed with them the latest developments in the Middle East.

Dr. Majali lauded the American stand towards Middle East issues, particularly those concerning Jordan, reflecting Jordan's stand vis-a-vis the peace process which aims at removing all the obstacles that hinder the march towards peace.

Dr. Majali also blamed the faltering peace process on the policies of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

"Peace is no more an individual desire but rather an international demand," said



His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan receives a U.S. Congress delegation visiting Jordan Saturday. The delegation also met with His Royal Highness Prince Talal and Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali (photo by Yusef 'Allan)

Dr. Majali.

"Security, which the Israelis call for, cannot be achieved through creating obstacles that curb any further development and stability in the region," he added.

Dr. Majali said that the sanctions imposed on the

Iraqis denies their basic rights and that its continuation does not serve the objectives and principles of the international community.

Members of the delegation expressed their country's support for Jordan's endeavours to reach a just

comprehensive and durable peace in the region.

The delegation also met His Royal Highness Prince Talal Ben Mohammad, director of the State Security Council and reviewed with him the peace process and issues of common concern.

PNA calls on Clinton to save peace process

GAZA CITY (AFP) — The Palestinian cabinet appealed to U.S. President Bill Clinton Saturday to save the peace process from the dangers of Israeli occupation and settlement activity.

"We call on President Clinton to save the peace process endangered by Israel's champions of occupation and settlement activity," the cabinet said three days ahead of the U.S. leader's meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Mr. Clinton is to meet Palestinian President Yasser Arafat Thursday, also in Washington. Mr. Arafat expressed hope the United States would pressure Mr. Netanyahu.

"My greatest hope is that President Clinton can convince Netanyahu to respect his commitments," he told journalists Saturday morning after the cabinet's overnight meeting.

Mr. Netanyahu's government has made an overdue West Bank troop pullback dependent on Palestinian readiness to accept a long list of conditions it says are contained within past agreements.

Mr. Arafat also rejected Israeli suggestions that Israel will retain control over about 60 per cent of the West Bank under a final agreement with the Palestinians.

"Who would agree to such a demand," he said several times. His spokesman, Nabil Abu Rudeina, ruled out peace with Israel as long as the Palestinians do not have "their legitimate rights."

"There will be neither peace nor security as long as the Palestinians are not able to exercise their legitimate rights throughout their territories with Jerusalem as the capital of the state of Palestine," he said.

Hizbollah claims attack on Israeli jeep in south Lebanon

BEIRUT (AFP) — The Hizbollah militia said Saturday it blew up an Israeli jeep carrying senior Israeli officers in south Lebanon just three kilometres north of the border between the occupied zone and the rest of Lebanon. The SLA said it suffered no casualties in those raids.

Israel says it occupies the zone in south Lebanon to avert cross-border attacks on its northern territory.

Also Saturday, officials here said Lebanon filed a complaint with the international ceasefire monitoring committee in south Lebanon over Israeli shelling of civilian areas.

The Israeli military "seriously damaged two houses" in Jarjou in the Iqlim Al Tuffah heights stronghold of the Hizbollah militia, about 50 km south of Beirut, the officials said.

that there were no casualties.

The SLA also confirmed attacks by Hizbollah Saturday morning on three forts the SLA controls on the border between the occupied zone and the rest of Lebanon. The SLA said it suffered no casualties in those raids.

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Iraqi Kurdish faction makes peace proposal to rival

DUBAI (AFP) — The Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) released details Saturday of a 14-point peace proposal it has put to the rival Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) to end factional fighting which has killed nearly 3,000 people in northern Iraq since 1994.

The plan sent by KDP leader Massoud Barzani to his PUK leader Jalal Talebani foresees internationally-supervised elections and the restoration of the joint administration which ran much of northern Iraq from the Kurdish uprising which followed the 1991 Gulf war until its col-

lapse in 1994.

Mr. Barzani also proposed an "end to the presence in Iraqi Kurdistan of armed units of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)" which Ankara accuses of using Iraqi rear bases in its campaign for self-rule in southeastern Turkey.

A reestablished joint administration should undertake to "respect the rules of good neighbourliness with all neighbouring states within the framework of the unity and sovereignty of Iraq," Mr. Barzani said.

Turkish troops have repeatedly invaded

northern Iraq in their campaign against the PKK, in which they are backed by fighters of the KDP.

The joint administration should be responsible for the collection of taxes and customs levies and pay civil servants working in Kurdish-held districts of northern Iraq, Barzani said.

The sharing of customs duties levied at the Turkish border, the region's principal source of revenue, was the main reason for the collapse of the joint administration.

Palestinian president expects no breakthrough in Washington

By Elias Zananiri

PALESTINIAN NATIONAL Authority (PNA) President Yasser Arafat knows very well that no surprises are waiting for him in Washington and therefore he does not have that much to anticipate out of his forthcoming summit meeting with U.S. President Bill Clinton. President Arafat will try to press for a significant scope of Israeli redeployment in the West Bank and will ask President Clinton for urgent steps to stop Israel's unilateral measures, mainly Jewish settlement construction and expansion in the West Bank. But the message is already there.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has made it clear to the Palestinians, as well as to U.S. officials, that his cabinet coalition is not stable enough to make a decision on redeployment in the West Bank.

But that is not the whole truth. The fact is that Mr. Netanyahu has made up his mind that his troops are never to be withdrawn or redeployed, regardless of whether the Palestinians accept his 12-page list of condi-

tions or not. Ahmad Tibi, special advisor to President Arafat on Israeli affairs, was right in his comment about the Israeli list of demands. Dr. Tibi said that "even if the PNA adopts the Herut [Likud ascendants] anthem and sing Zionist songs, it would not satisfy Netanyahu's greedy conditions and demands, which are but a pretext not to fulfil the Oslo accords."

In talks he held in Amman last week with His Majesty King Hussein and in meetings he later had in Ramallah and Hebron, President Arafat reiterated his warnings that should his talks in Washington fail to bring about a breakthrough on the Palestinian track, a new wave of violence might erupt in the region.

His close aide, Nabil Shaath, minister of international cooperation, was less cautious in his warnings. Speaking to members of the Foreign Press Association (FPA) in Israel last Thursday, Mr. Shaath said a "horrible catastrophe is ahead of us if no breakthrough is achieved."

Yet, as if the Palestinians understood Mr. Netanyahu's dilemma and his political impo-

otence, Mr. Shaath suggested that the PNA might be ready for a compromise on the scope of the second phase redeployment in the West Bank provided they are served with U.S. and international guarantees that a third redeployment will also be implemented, involving the rest of the territories to become under the control of the PNA by the end of the interim period and on the eve of conducting final status talks.

Mr. Shaath's message to Mr. Netanyahu was clear. The Israeli prime minister has climbed up a high tree and finds it extremely difficult to come down, at least not without the help of the Palestinians. Mr. Netanyahu pledged to his extreme right-wing coalition partners that he will not order a redeployment in the West Bank.

On the other hand, he faces threats from the Third Way and the ultra-orthodox Shas Party to withdraw from his government if the peace process is not moved forward. Similar threats also came from his own defence minister, Yitzhak Mordechai, who gave Mr. Netanyahu a three-month ultimatum to end

the present impasse or else he would resign in the footsteps of David Levy, the foreign minister who decided to turn his resignation threats into a bitter reality for Mr. Netanyahu.

However, it seems the PNA is now giving Mr. Netanyahu the ladder that could bring him down safely. The PNA might be ready to accept a limited redeployment, something within 10 to 12 per cent of the West Bank in the second phase, provided the third phase of redeployment covers the rest of the 90 per cent of the West Bank, according to Palestinian interpretation of the Oslo accords. In those accords, Palestinian officials insist, it was agreed that Israel would only keep under its control military installations and Jewish settlements, whose fate are to be resolved in final status negotiations.

The total area of those installations and settlements, according to Palestinian officials, cannot be more than 10 per cent of the West Bank. "We say the area that should be handed over to the PNA according to the interim agreements is about 90 per cent of the West Bank and

Netanyahu can argue that it is 85 or 88 per cent but not 40 or 42 per cent as he is suggesting today. The difference in interpretation, as such, should be minor and not so vast," said Mr. Shaath.

Right after the Israeli government adopted the document prepared by its secretary, Danny Naveh, on alleged Palestinian violations of the interim accords, the PNA came out with its own list of Israeli violations along with explanations refuting the Israeli charges. The Israeli document, to be submitted by Mr. Netanyahu to President Clinton in their Monday summit meeting in Washington, includes an article on the Palestinian National Charter which Israel demands it be changed.

The PNA said in its explanation that the charter had already been amended back on April 24 of last year in the presence of U.S. former consul general in Jerusalem, Edward Abington, who was one of dozens of foreign delegates attending the Palestine National Council (PNC) session in Gaza.

"The draft we presented to the

PNC had been pre-accepted by then foreign minister of Israel, Shimon Peres, and his deputy, Yossi Beilin, was in constant contact with us by phone throughout the PNC session," revealed Mr. Shaath in his meeting with the FPA and said that the Israeli claims on the charter were totally groundless and void.

No one can find, for the moment, an effective way to get both Palestinians and Israelis out of the present vicious circle of demands and counter-demands, or conditions and counter-conditions. A senior U.S. official was quoted last week as telling the Israeli Haaretz daily that the U.S. wants both President Arafat and Mr. Netanyahu to show flexibility in their meetings with President Clinton. "Every party understands the difficulties of the other. Pragmatism is needed and neither party should be allowed to present conditions that the other party is unable to fulfil," the official said adding that the PNA cannot agree with Israel's demand to extradite the 34 Palestinians whose names had been handed over to the

PNA several months ago.

When asked if he has a formula or a mechanism to pull both parties out of their dilemma, Mr. Shaath simply said that honouring the signed agreements is the best and easiest way. "We do not need to negotiate any agreements. All we need is to honour the existing ones. Otherwise, we will reach new agreements that will not be honoured in the future and this is a total waste of time," he said.

The PNA, said Mr. Shaath, is deeply concerned about Israel's security because it believes it is tantamount to the security of the Palestinians.

"It should be clear that every time a suicide bombing attack takes place, the Palestinians are the main losers. Israel immediately punishes the whole population and closes down all passages between the PNA areas. One should look for the motive when it comes to analysing why a suicide attack is carried out and then he would find out that the Palestinians are the most affected by this act." He added that the PNA is doing its best to maintain security regardless of

what happens on other tracks.

He refuted Israeli allegations of lack of security cooperation on the part of the PNA and said that the problem is not in security cooperation "because we have done all our best but it was Netanyahu who refused to sign the agreement that was initiated between Palestinian and Israeli officers with the presence of U.S. officials."

As he spoke, one journalist asked if it was a mere coincidence that the Palestinian security forces had discovered a Hamas arms cache in Nablus last week just a few days before President Arafat's trip to Washington. Mr. Shaath said that Israeli security is parallel to Palestinian security and therefore "the PNA is doing its best to maintain security for both sides." A Palestinian official later told the Jordan Times that "if we do not take action they say we fail to fight terror and when we carry out a successful operation, they say it is because of this summit or that meeting. Frankly, I do not know what would satisfy the world."

Iranian, French FM's discuss Algeria massacres

TEHRAN (AFP) — The foreign ministers of Iran and France have voiced concern at the massacres in Algeria, and pledged to coordinate Muslim and European efforts to end the bloodshed. Iranian radio reported Saturday.

In a telephone conversation Friday, Kamal Kharazi and Hubert Vedrine stressed the need for the 55-member Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and the

15-member European Union (EU) to work together on Algeria, the radio said.

"The Algerian government should not consider the willingness of other countries to put an end to the massacres as interference in its internal affairs," said Mr. Kharazi.

Tehran has been under great domestic pressure to use its position as OIC president to work for an end to the massacres of civilians in Algeria, which have claimed

more than 1,500 lives since Dec. 30, according to Algerian press reports.

But tentative diplomatic initiatives have met with a stern rejection from Algiers which zealously defends its sovereignty and freedom from interference in its internal affairs.

Algiers broke off diplomatic relations with Tehran in 1993, accusing it of backing unrest by Islamist opposition groups following the

cancellation the previous year of parliamentary elections which they were poised to win.

Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei condemned on Friday international indifference to the massacres and urged the Algerian government to protect its citizens.

"We do not want to be assertive but there is no doubt that the Algerian government is responsible for

the safety of its citizens," he told prayers at Tehran University.

"The astonishing thing is the coldness and silence of international organisations in the face of this unprecedented tragedy," he said.

In his talks with Mr. Vedrine, Mr. Kharazi also praised France's "positive" approach to Middle East policy, and said Tehran was willing to cooperate with Paris in the region.

Tunisian arrives in Algiers with message for Zeroual

ALGIERS (AFP) — Tunisian Foreign Minister Said Ben Mostepha arrived in strife-torn Algeria on Saturday, bearing a message from President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, state radio said.

There was no word on the contents of the message for President Liamine Zeroual, nor did the radio say how long the foreign minister from Algeria's Mediterranean neighbour to the east would be staying.

But Tunis — like many other Arab capitals — backs Algeria's policy in battling armed Islamist groups, six years after the military foiled an election victory by fundamentalists.

Togo's Foreign Minister Koffi Panou is due in Algiers on Sunday, also bearing a message from President Gnassingbe Eyadema.

Meanwhile, Tripoli on Saturday released what it called an appeal from Mr. Zeroual to Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi calling for North African solidarity, after a Spanish press report that NATO is quietly drafting plans for a peacekeeping force in the region.

In the message, carried Saturday by Libya's official JANA news agency, Mr. Zeroual said he was "concerned" by the reported NATO move, saying "it would threaten our common interests."

Mubarak tells Zeroual he rejects foreign interference in Algeria

CAIRO (AFP) — Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak on Friday told his Algerian counterpart Liamine Zeroual by telephone that he rejects any foreign interference in the Algerian crisis, the official Egyptian news agency MENA reported.

During the conversation, Mr. Mubarak told the Algerian president that Egypt rejects "all foreign attempts to interfere in Algeria's internal affairs," the agency said.

He also "renewed Cairo's support for Algeria in its struggle against terrorism...which requires international solidarity to crush."

In recent weeks, Algeria has seen a wave of massacres which have left as many as 1,000 people dead.

Algeria plunged into violence in January 1992 after the military intervened to cancel the second round of elections the Islamic Salvation Front was set to win. Since then, an estimated 80,000 people have died in political violence.

It would be necessary, the former general added, for North African states "to reinforce our solidarity to confront challenges," according to the JANA report.

"Algeria is ready to do all it can for a joint Maghreb action that represents a strategic option," he was quoted as telling Col. Qadhafi.

Madrid's El Mundo newspaper reported Dec. 4 that a new NATO sub-regional headquarters in Spain would be responsible for planning the deployment of 50,000 troops in North Africa for peacekeeping operations.

That assignment emanates from a "confidential strategic document" that has been approved by military commanders of the 16-nation North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), the daily said.

Col. Qadhafi, who blames the bloodshed in Algeria on Islamists working for the West to blacken Islam's image, has already condemned the reported NATO plans.

Though no-one is formally proposing an international armed force for Algeria, Mr. Zeroual's regime has rejected Western demands to investigate the killings, saying the strife is a domestic affair.

Palestinian official asks U.S. to put pressure on Israel

CAIRO (AP) — A high-ranking Palestinian official called on the United States Friday to use next week's talks in Washington to force Israel to implement the Israeli-Palestinian peace accords.

Speaking to reporters at Cairo Airport, Farouk Kaddoumi, the virtual "foreign minister" of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), said U.S. President Bill Clinton talks on Jan. 20-22 will be a "last chance" for peace.

Mr. Clinton is scheduled to hold separate meetings with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat.

Mr. Kaddoumi, who is based in Tunis, arrived in Egypt for talks with Foreign Minister Anwar Musa on the

peace process.

Mr. Kaddoumi is opposed to the 1993 and 1995 Israeli-Palestinian peace agreements, but continues to hold considerable influence in the PLO as head of its political department.

"The United States should put pressure on Israel to force it abide by the agreements it signed in the framework of the Mideast peace process," Mr. Kaddoumi said.

The Palestinians have accused Israel of failing to respect the agreements to withdraw its military from the West Bank and to cease building Jewish settlements in the territory.

Israeli-Palestinian talks have been stalled since March when Israel began building a Jewish settlement in Arab east Jerusalem.

Iraqi disabled hold government-run picket against U.N. sanctions

BAGHDAD (AP) — About 45 disabled people took part in a government-organised demonstration outside the U.N. Development Programme (UNDP) offices here late Friday, calling for the lifting of U.N. sanctions.

The picket took place on the eve of the seventh anniversary of the outbreak of the 1991 Gulf war in which U.S.-led forces drove an Iraqi army out of Kuwait.

The disabled, many of whom in wheelchairs, were supported in the bitterly cold weather by about 100 people. They carried placards supporting President Saddam Hussein and planned to hand in a protest note calling for an end to the sanctions imposed after Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

"We are here to commemorate the American and allied aggression on Iraq and we are asking the world to be fair to Iraq's demands for the lifting of sanctions," an official of the state-run General Federation of Iraqi Youth, Hassan Nafal, said.

"Many children and elderly people are dying because of the unjust embargo. So America should review its policy on Iraq," Mr. Nafal added.

Demonstrators are scheduled to march from Baghdad's Central Liberation Square to the UNDP offices early Saturday to mark the outbreak of the 1991 war.

At 8:00 a.m. local time air raid sirens will wail across the city, marking the time of the first air strikes in the war. And at 11:00 a.m. local time President Saddam is due to address the nation on television.

The sanctions — which ban the sale of Iraq's principal export, oil — have devastated the Iraqi economy and caused widespread malnutrition, U.N. officials have reported.

The U.N. Security Council has said it will not lift the sanctions until Baghdad has eliminated its weapons of mass destruction. Iraq claims to have done so, but U.N. arms inspectors have repeatedly accused Baghdad of concealing evidence about its weapons programmes.



ERBAKAN BANNED: Former Turkish Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan raises his fist as he speaks to reporters at a news conference Saturday in Ankara. Turkey's constitutional court Friday outlawed the Islam-based Welfare Party and banned Mr. Erbakan from political leadership for five years (Reuters photo)

Kurdish leader threatens to step up war if Turkey rejects accord

BEIRUT (AP) — A Kurdish leader waging a guerrilla war against Turkey has threatened to step up his campaign if Ankara makes no move toward a political settlement.

Abdullah Ocalan, leader of the Kurdistan Labour Party (PKK), said the war between autonomy-seeking Kurds and Turkey can be stopped this year if Ankara agrees to talk to the rebels.

"If Turkey fails to get closer to a political solution, we will wage the war more fiercely than the past year. We will take serious military steps," Mr. Ocalan said in an interview published Saturday with the London-based Arabic newspaper Al Hayat.

Mr. Ocalan, whose 15,000-

strong PKK is fighting for independence in southeastern Turkey, did not elaborate.

"If a dialogue takes place, the war may stop in 1998. If they [Turks] accept a dialogue, we will, on our part, stop the war. All European states want the war to stop," he said.

Turkey has ignored such calls in the past, saying negotiating with a group it regards as terrorist was out of the question.

The 13-year war between separatist Kurdish rebels and Turkish forces has killed at least 27,000 people. Since 1991, some 2 million Kurds from 2,500 villages have been forced to relocate.

Kurds, a major ethnic group living in regions straddling Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria, are

estimated to number about 20 million.

Al Hayat did not say where the interview was conducted. It said a correspondent interviewed Mr. Ocalan, who is believed to be based in Syrian-controlled eastern Lebanon or in neighbouring Syria, in a regional state.

However, Mr. Ocalan denied in the interview that the PKK has bases in Syria, Iran or eastern Lebanon's Bekaa Valley.

"These [reports on bases] are Turkish allegations. We do not need them [bases]... We are present in Kurdistan," he said.

Last month, Mr. Ocalan appealed to European Union countries to mediate peace talks with Turkey, saying he was ready for a ceasefire.

Turkish human rights activist faces arrest

ANKARA (AFP) — A Turkish court has issued a fresh arrest warrant for a blind human rights activist who was already briefly jailed before being released late last year, press reports here said Saturday.

Esber Yagmurdereli, a 52-year-old lawyer, is facing a 23-year prison term after losing an appeal against a conviction for "pro-Kurd separatist propaganda" in May.

Although only given a 10-month sentence, the lawyer is liable to serve 23 years because of previous convictions.

Jailed in 1978 for "armed subversive activity," he was released in 1991 under a new law that allowed him freedom on condition that if he offended again, he would have to serve the remainder of his 36-year sentence.

Yagmurdereli was arrested and imprisoned in mid-October, but an Ankara court on Nov. 9 ruled to postpone his sentence for one year due to his ailing health and released him.

But another court in the town of Cankiri in northern

Turkey on Friday ordered his arrest again for an unspecified reason, the press reports said.

If police find Yagmurdereli, who lives in Istanbul, he will be placed in the Cankiri prison, where he was jailed last year, to serve the remainder of his sentence, the reports said.

His imprisonment had caused outrage in several Western countries and prompted left-wing Turkish political parties to question the country's legal system.

Iran, Iraq seek to normalise ties

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran and Iraq said Saturday that they wanted to normalise relations and settle their disputes, the official IRNA news agency said.

Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammed Said Al Sahhaf said in talks here with Iranian counterpart Kamal Kharazi that Iraq "is looking to the future and wants better relations with Iran," according to IRNA.

He expressed the hope that "all the problems" the two countries have will be "resolved in negotiations."

"Close cooperation between Iran and Iraq, two large and important countries in the region, guarantees the reciprocal interests of the two peoples and contributes to peace and

stability in the region," Mr. Sahhaf said.

Mr. Kharazi said, "the resolution of the two countries' problems can have a positive impact on the entire region."

During initial talks at the foreign ministry, "the issues of prisoners of war, war reparations and Iraqi planes dominated the discussions," officials said.

Iraq says it released all Iranian prisoners at the end of their 1980-88 war, but Iran says several thousand are still in Iraqi prisons.

Iraq is also calling for Iran to return its planes which were flown here just before the 1991 Gulf war.

Iraq says 148 of its planes, of which 33 are civilian aircraft, are on Iranian soil, but Tehran

says the total number is 22.

Soldiers missing in action and prisoners of war still in Iraq are also important obstacles to the full implementation of U.N. Security Council Resolution 598.

The 1988 resolution ended the eight-year Iran-Iraq war. Mr. Sahhaf arrived in Tehran Friday night for a three-day visit and is expected to meet Iranian President Mohammad Khatami during his stay.

The Iranian foreign minister said Thursday that Iraq was seeking Iranian support for the lifting of the U.N. embargo imposed on Baghdad after it invaded Kuwait in August 1990.

Iraq says that delivery of the Iraqi planes must wait for the lifting of the embargo.

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14:10Cartoon
14:30French Programmes
16:15Prayers
16:30Believe and Behave
17:00Energy Express
17:30Tarzan
18:30News Headlines
18:35America's Funniest Home Videos
19:00News in French
19:15Ramadan Talks
20:01Dadd's Army
20:30Killing for a Living
21:00Renegade II
22:00News in English
22:30North and South
23:15The Jewel in the Crown
23:59Islam in a changing world

PRAYER TIMES

05:11Fajr
06:32(Sunrise) Duha
11:46Dhuhr
14:36Asr
17:00Maghreb
18:21Isha

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Tel. 824328.
German-speaking Evangelical
Congregation Tel. 688404
The Latter-Day Saints Tel.
654932.
Church of Nazarene Tel.
675691.
The Evangelical Local Church
in Amman Tel. 811295
English-speaking
Latin Catholics Parish Tel.
614190.

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology
Relative cold weather conditions will prevail, skies partly cloudy, winds northerly moderate, with a chance of scattered showers.

On Monday, skies will be sunny to partly cloudy. In Aqaba, skies will be partly cloudy with a chance of scattered showers, winds northerly moderate, and seas calm.
Amman06/13
Aqaba10/22
Deserts03/15
Jordan Valley10/20

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 14, Aqaba 23 Humidity
readings: Amman 44 per cent.
Aqaba 23 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

AMMAN:
Dr. Hanna Mansour750197
Dr. Nidal Al Dahleh827195
Dr. Sa'ad Tawfik788285
Dr. Youssef Naser751144
Firas pharmacy661912
Ferdows pharmacy778336
Al Asema pharmacy637055
Nairoukh pharmacy623672
Al Salam pharmacy636730
Yacoub pharmacy644945
Shmeisani pharmacy637660
Najib pharmacy847632
IRBID:
On Monday, skies will be sunny to partly cloudy. In Aqaba, skies will be partly cloudy with a chance of scattered showers, winds northerly moderate, and seas calm.
Amman06/13
Aqaba10/22
Deserts03/15
Jordan Valley10/20

Dr. Mazen Abu Bakir76802
Al Quds pharmacy(—)
ZARQA:
Dr. Rabbat Atallah994424
Khalifeh pharmacy98541

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre637111
Civil Defence Department661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue630341
Civil Defence Emergency199
Rescue Police192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade617101
Blood Bank775121
Highway Police843402
Traffic Police896390
Public Security Dept.630321
Hotel Complaints605800
Price Complaints661176
Wax & Sewage Complaints897467
Amman Municipality Complaints787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance)121
Overseas Calls010230
Central Amman Telephone
Repairs623101
Abdali Tel. Repairs661101
Jordan Television773111
Radio Jordan774111
Water Authority680100
J. Electricity Authority815615
Electric Power Co.636381
RJ Flight Information44-53200

Queen Alia Intl. Airport 44-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre813813/32
Khaleel Maternity644281/6
Akileh Maternity642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity642362
Malhas, J. Amman636140
Palestine, Shmeisani607071
Shmeisani Hospital669131
University Hospital845845
Al-Muasher Hospital667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali666126/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen777101/3
Al-Bashir775111/26
Army, Marka891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital602240/50
Amal Hospital674155
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery865199
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital09983323
Zarqa National Hospital09900560
Ibn Sina Hospital09986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital09990990
IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital02275555
Greek Catholic Hospital02272725

Abn Al Nafes Hospital (02)247100

AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital (031314111)

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information Department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (44) 53200-5, where it should always be verified. Information on other flights can be supplied on phone (44) (52700)

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
08:05Larnaca (RJ)
08:25Bombay (RJ)
08:35Jeddah (RJ)
09:15Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)
09:50Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
10:05Beirut (RJ)
17:00Brussels, Geneva (RJ)
17:45London (RJ)
19:30 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
19:40Rome (RJ)
21:00Madrid, Athens (RJ)
21:50Frankfurt (RJ)
22:50Vienna, Aqaba (RJ)

02:15Cairo (RJ)

Other Flights
03:25Rome (AZ)
10:00Sanaa (IY)
11:00Riyadh (add) (SV)
12:25Bahrain (GF)
13:00Moscow (SU)
15:00Doha (QR)
17:45Jeddah (SV)
20:00Tel Aviv (LY)
20:40Cairo (MS)
23:10Istanbul (TK)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
06:20Beirut (RJ)
10:30Athens, Frankfurt (RJ)
10:50Aqaba, Vienna (RJ)
11:15Rome (RJ)
11:30Tunis, Casablanca (RJ)
11:30Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
12:15London (RJ)

20:15New Delhi (RJ)

20:50Jeddah (RJ)
21:00Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
22:45Cairo (RJ)
23:00Jakarta (RJ)
23:30Bangkok (RJ)
23:59Kuala Lumpur (RJ)
00:30Sanaa (RJ)
03:50Zurich (RJ)

Other Flights

03:00Athens (OA)
04:20Rome (AZ)
06:40Beirut, London (BA)
07:50London (BA)
11:00Sanaa (IY)
13:15Doha (GF)
14:50Moscow (SU)
16:00Doha (QR)
19:15Jeddah (SV)
21:20Tel Aviv (LY)
21:40Cairo (MS)

Royal Wings (RW)

06:45 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
08:15Aqaba (RW)
09:30Amman (QAIA) (RW)
16:45 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
17:55Tel Aviv (RW)
20:30Amman (QAIA) (RW)
21:50Aqaba (RW)

Lower House speaker 'surprised' by statement critical of deputy

By Fairouz Abu-Ghazaleh
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Lower House Speaker Sa'd Hayel Srour on Saturday said he was "surprised" by a recent government statement critical of a deputy and stated that lawmakers have the right to express themselves freely under the dome of Parliament.

Meanwhile, deputy Ahmad Oweili Abbadi said he was planning to sue the government for JDS million in compensation for damages caused by Wednesday's harsh statement.

The government, responding to Dr. Abbadi's allegations of official corruption, nepotism and favouritism, had attacked him without naming him and said the deputy threatened "national unity."

"The [House's] general discussion is an opportunity for all those wishing to speak to express themselves under Parliament's dome," said Mr. Srour. "I was surprised by the government's statement because the podium is accessible to both the government and House deputies," he said before deputies resumed discussions of the 1998 draft budget.

Mr. Srour, who returned to

Parliament yesterday after leading Jordan's delegation to an Arab parliamentary meeting in Luxor, said the House was committed to official regulations and would not tolerate any offence to Jordanians and their institutions.

"Any member of Parliament is free to express himself openly as long as he adheres to internal regulations," he added.

The government denounced the deputy for "deviating from the subject while discussing [the budget], not telling the truth and using personal and offensive language when referring to public officials."

Dr. Abbadi, who cast a vote of confidence for the Cabinet of Abdul Salam Majali on Dec. 15, lashed out at the government and many of its ministers and accused present and past governments of putting the wrong man in the wrong place.

In a lengthy and often heated speech that was broadcast live on Jordan Television, Dr. Abbadi called on the government to stop granting citizenship to "the bedouins and citizens of neighbouring Arab countries" — an implicit reference to Palestinians who form a large percentage of the

Kingdom's 4.5 million population.

Meanwhile, 360 members of the Abbadi tribe signed a petition condemning Dr. Abbadi's speech, saying that it contained "lies and falsehoods designed to serve personal interests."

In an advertisement placed in a local paper, the tribesmen said: "We, the sons of the Abbadi tribe in Jordan, who believe in the country's national unity...denounce the statements made by Dr. Abbadi."

Dr. Abbadi's speech and the government's statement have generated a barrage of criticism from many deputies.

On the street, many ordinary Jordanians said they were shocked by parts of the speech that questioned citizenship rights. Newspaper columnists were equally divided.

"I was dismayed to hear [certain deputies] slandering and harming the country's national unity in a manner that is contradictory to our constitution, regulations and Arab and Islamic ethics," deputy Nawaf Khawaldah told the House on Saturday. "We had also hoped that our discussions would only take place in Parliament and not outside it, in the form of statements."

During Saturday's session, Islamist deputy Mohammad Ra'fat, who engaged the House by a recent visit to Israel, was finally able to deliver his speech.

In his previous attempt during Wednesday's session, more than ten deputies withdrew from the session when Mr. Ra'fat took to the podium to read his speech, breaking the House's quorum. On Saturday, more than 12 deputies left the hall before he spoke, but the quorum was not affected as the overall deputy turnout was higher than that of the last session.

The deputies who left the hall said they wanted to protest against Mr. Ra'fat and fellow deputy Hamadeh Fara'neh for visiting Arab east Jerusalem on Dec. 18 and meeting with Israeli Knesset Speaker Dan Tichon and other officials.

The House is expected to vote on the budget on Monday after the government replies to issues raised in deputies' speeches. Many lawmakers questioned the government on soaring poverty and unemployment and on Jordan's IMF-agreed economic reforms launched in 1989.

U.S. allocates \$225 million for Jordan in 1999 fiscal budget

WASHINGTON (Petra) — U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright on Saturday informed Foreign Minister Fayez Tarawneh of the American administration's decision to allocate \$225 million for Jordan in the 1999 U.S. fiscal budget.

Dr. Tarawneh said the assistance reflects the U.S. administration's appreciation of Jordan's policies and its economic achievements

as attested by international organisations.

The minister, who has been holding talks with American officials in Washington, said senior U.S. officials informed him of Washington's satisfaction with reports from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on the Kingdom's economic situation.

The U.S. administration

highly appreciates the latest legislative amendments under the context of the economic reform programme, according to Dr. Tarawneh.

In reply to a question on U.S. President Bill Clinton's upcoming meetings with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Dr. Tarawneh voiced his optimism and

described them as an indication of the American willingness to play a pivotal and effective role at the presidential and ministerial levels in the peace process.

Dr. Tarawneh voiced hope that the Palestinians and Israelis would implement the Hebron protocol, which stipulates the redeployment of Israeli forces in the West Bank by mid-1998.

Five die in road accident near Ma'an

MA'AN (Petra) — Five people, including four members of the same family, died in a road accident Saturday near the southern town of Ma'an.

The five were travelling to Aqaba in a small car when their vehicle was hit some 25 kilometres south of Ma'an by a bus travelling in the opposite direction.

The bus, which was carrying 42 Egyptians on their

way to perform lesser pilgrimage (umra) in Mecca, went off course and hit the oncoming car, instantly killing the five people.

The victims include the car's driver, Mohammad Ensour, 27, Fendi Obeidat, 53, a bank manager in Aqaba, his wife Hana, 34, and their children Rawan and Mohammad.

Another child, Rami Obeidat, the sole survivor of the accident, sustained

injuries and was taken to Ma'an government hospital for treatment. He was later referred to King Hussein Medical Centre in Amman.

On Friday night, a bus hit a private car in the Amman area, resulting in the injury of 20 people.

The injured were taken by Civil Defence Department (CDD) vehicles and private cars to two hospitals for treatment.

A CDD official said the injured from the two vehicles suffered fractured bones, bruises and wounds. He added that the injured are being treated at Al Bashir Hospital and the Military Hospital in the Marka district.

The CDD on Saturday announced that in the past week it dealt with 1,104 accidents, which resulted in 191 injuries and 19 deaths.

Jordan, UNDP to publish first national human development report

AMMAN (J.T.) — As part of its commitment to promote sustainable human development and improve living standards, the government of Jordan has approved plans to publish a National Human Development Report in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), according to a UNDP press release.

The project agreement was officially signed Saturday by Ministry of Planning Secretary General Nabil Ammari and UNDP Resident Representative Jorgen Lissner. The total production cost of three successive reports for the years 1998 to 2000, estimated at \$225,000, will be jointly financed by the UNDP and the

British Department for International Development. The first report is expected to be published in the fall of 1998, the statement said.

Since 1990, the UNDP's global Human Development Report has closely examined whether economic growth managed to translate into tangible improvements in people's quality of life. Every year, it ranks 174 countries around the world according to the Human Development Index (HDI), which is based on three socio-economic indicators — life expectancy, literacy and per capita gross domestic product. Last year, Jordan ranked 84, placing it in the "medium human development" category, the announce-

ment continued.

Like the global Human Development Report, Jordan's National Human Development Report will place emphasis on people-centred development, highlighting a range of socio-economic factors that affect, both positively and negatively, Jordan's HDI ranking in the global report. The national report is expected to convey a more elaborate picture of human development in Jordan, using the latest statistics and in-depth analysis, according to the press release.

One of the outstanding features of the first edition of Jordan's National Human Development Report will be its special focus on youth. This theme was selected because

adolescents and young adults comprise a large segment of Jordanian society, with nearly 40 per cent of the population falling in the 15-35 age group. In addition, the role and problems of youth in society have not received enough attention compared to other issues such as unemployment, poverty, environmental conservation or the advancement of women.

More than sixty countries around the world have embarked on projects to produce a National Human Development Report. In the Arab region, Lebanon, Egypt, Palestine, Iraq and Tunisia have already published similar national reports, the statement concluded.

International humanitarian law office concludes work here

By Hind-Lara Mango
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — An advisory office on international humanitarian law (IHL) has concluded two years of work in Amman with local and international bodies in Lebanon, Yemen, Egypt and Jordan to promote and disseminate provisions of IHL in national legislation.

According to Amour Zemzemi, legal advisor for IHL advisory services in Amman and the Arab region, many Arab states who are party to the Geneva Convention on human rights have little in their national legislation pertaining to IHL.

"After studying national legislation in Jordan I found little to nothing about IHL," noted Dr. Zemzemi. Therefore, he said, the advisory office in Amman prepared draft plans for amendments to national legislation to enhance IHL.

Government approves commission increase for gas distributors

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The government has approved an increase in the commission that petrol stations and gas cylinder distributors receive from the Jordan Petroleum Refinery (JPR), a government official said Saturday.

The official, who asked not to be named, said the increase in the commission was approved by a Cabinet committee in charge of development affairs.

He declined to reveal the details of the new commission, saying that it will be announced by the end of this month.

The official dismissed reports in the Arabic daily Al Aswaq that the new commission figures will be two per cent for oil and oil derivatives and 450 fils for each gas cylinder.

"This information is not accurate. The new formula will be announced soon, and [it] is satisfactory for both sides, the government and the distributors," the official told the Jordan Times.

The government's decision to increase the commis-

sion followed threats earlier this month by the Petrol Station and Gas Cylinder Distributors Association to go on strike if their demands were not met.

The decision to strike was made by approximately 250 petrol stations and 900 gas cylinder distributors to pressure the government to increase the commission from the JPR.

The current commission system, effective since 1963, stipulates that gas distributors receive 18 per cent, or 350 fils, from the total price of each gas cylinder, and 1 per cent from the total cost of each litre of oil, diesel and kerosene.

The association called off the planned strike following a "verbal pledge" from the government to increase the commission.

The decision to hike the commission was expected earlier this month but no reason was given for the delay.

Government officials have repeatedly said that any changes to the present commission paid to the gas and oil distributors will not affect the total price of these vital commodities.

But the association's deputy chairperson, Yousef Abdul Jalil, said they have received no information from the government about the increase in the commission.

Mr. Abdul Jalil told the Jordan Times that any percentage approved by the government would be "satisfactory" for the association.

"We do not know the reasons behind the delay of this decision. But we believe the government has its reasons for not making the announcement now," Mr. Abdul Jalil said.

Meanwhile, Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources Saleh Horani has issued instructions to all petrol stations in the Kingdom to ensure that safety measures are being applied to protect the public and the environment.

Dr. Horani said these measures were agreed upon by the ministry, the JPR, the distributors' association and the civil defence authority.

The minister told the Arabic daily Al Ra'i that violators risk losing their work licence.

WHAT'S GOING ON

FILM

* Musical film "Gypsy Passion" (dancing performance by Joaquin Cortes) at Instituto Cervantes, Jabal Amman at 7:30 p.m.

FRENCH COMEDY CINEMA

* French comedy film entitled "La vengeance d'une blonde" at Philadelphia Cinema at 8:30 p.m. (sponsored by the French Cultural Centre).

EXHIBITIONS

* Display of Noor Al-Husseini Foundation (NAF) products at the NAF Jordan Design and Trade Centre, off Wadi Sagra Street (Tel. 69914172), until Jan. 31 (8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.).

* Installation by Jordanian artist Ali Jabri (until Jan. 27). Also displaying contemporary Arab artist exhibition (until Jan. 27) at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Al Weibdeh (Tel. 643251).

* Works by about a hundred artists from Iraq, Syria, Sudan, Lebanon and Jordan at Hammurabi Art Gallery, Gardens Street, until Feb. 20 (Tel. 5536098).

Opposition denounces trial of French philosopher Garaudy

AMMAN (J.T.) — Jordan's 12 opposition political parties Saturday issued a statement criticising the trial of French philosopher Roger Garaudy for publishing a book refuting claims that gas chambers killed millions of Jews in Nazi Germany.

The statement described the trial of Mr. Garaudy as a theatrical farce, adding that "the trial is exposing Zionism's influence on the Western media and society and its continued drive to steer the world in a manner that would serve the Jews and support their state of Israel in Palestine."

"The Zionists have fabricated the falsehoods about the extermination of the Jews in Germany to mislead the world and blackmail Western governments and society into support-

ing the Zionists' plots against mankind and the Palestinian people," according to the statement.

It said Mr. Garaudy is standing trial "because he has tried to expose the plots of the Zionists, who have accused him of antisemitic tendencies. This is a charge used by the Jews against all their adversaries and anyone who dares to stand against their crimes and their plots."

Mr. Garaudy, 84, a convert to Islam, went on trial last week in France for questioning crimes against humanity in his book "Les Mythes Fondateurs de la Politique Israelienne" (Founding Myths of Israeli Politics), which denies the existence of Nazi gas chambers for the extermination of the Jews. If convicted, Mr. Garaudy could face a one-year jail term and a 300,000

French franc (\$50,000) fine.

In their statement Saturday, the opposition parties:

1. Condemned the trial of Mr. Garaudy on false charges.
2. Demanded that the Arab lawyers federation despatch a group of attorneys to defend Mr. Garaudy.
3. Urged Arab thinkers and writers to give the writer support.
4. Appealed to wealthy Arabs and Muslims to provide sufficient funds for the defence of the French philosopher.
5. Demanded that Arab and Islamic media expose Zionism's plots and crimes, as well as propagate Mr. Garaudy's writings.
6. Called on the Jordanian masses to sign a petition demanding the cancellation of Mr. Garaudy's trial.

Recent workshop employs new election forecasting techniques

By Hind-Lara Mango
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — For the past two weeks, researchers at Al Urdun Al Jadid Research Centre have been analysing the results of the 1997 parliamentary elections in order to employ new concepts or techniques on how to forecast election results.

"The use of informal network analysis procedures to study the personal communication that occurs within tribal and family communities is very useful," said James Danowski, an associate professor in the department of communication at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Dr. Danowski explained that

in today's world of fast-moving technological research, a body of procedures has evolved to examine the linkages between people, particularly their political inclinations.

According to Dr. Danowski, these techniques accumulate results that can be quantified into statistics to represent the pattern of such communication activities. This is particularly important in political campaigns, polling, and in elections.

As for the political participation of women in American elections and the Jordanian elections, the communication expert said it was only at the turn of the century that women were even allowed to vote in America, and the system is def-

initely "anti-quota" in the United States.

In Jordan, however, since there are already quotas for minority Christians and Circassians, "one could imagine an effective quota for women here," he said.

Dr. Danowski said women should focus on determining the attributes that are perceived as important by potential voters.

"If the goal is to elect more women, then organisations pushing for this can develop strategies to emphasise the positive features that people are looking for in women candidates," said Dr. Danowski, adding that negative features should be addressed directly and not covered up.

Graduation ceremony for new diplomats to be held Sunday

AMMAN (J.T.) — A graduation ceremony for the first class of diplomats from the Institute of Diplomacy (ID) will be held Sunday at Al Hussein Sports City in Amman under the patronage of HRH Crown Prince Hassan.

The graduates completed the institute's 15-month Higher Diploma Programme in Diplomacy and Foreign Service.

Prince Hassan, chairman of the ID board of directors, is expected to award certificates to the graduates and invite them to an iftar banquet to celebrate the occasion.

The fellows, including six women, hold bachelor of arts and masters degrees in social sciences.

They were referred to the institute by the ministries of foreign affairs, higher education, planning and information and the Jordan Armed Forces, the Public Security Department and the Investment Promotion Corporation.

The ID, established in 1994, is academically linked to the University of Jordan. It opened its first three-term

training programme in September 1996, with courses offered in international relations, international law, negotiations among states, strategic and security studies, administration, settling of disputes among states, communication skills, Arabic and foreign languages, Arab and Islamic civilisation, and informatics, among other topics.

The trainees also attended workshops in which academics and diplomats from Jordan and other countries gave lectures on development, politics and the economy.

Water authority starts national meter protection campaign

By Ahmad Khatib
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Water Authority of Jordan (WAJ) Saturday launched a nationwide campaign to urge citizens to protect their water meters from damage caused by frost during the winter.

In its media campaign, the WAJ wants Jordanians to protect their water meters by placing plastic wrap around them and padding them with insulating materials such as rock wool.

Many Jordanians had to replace their weather-sensi-

tive water meters after they exploded last week due to below zero temperatures that accompanied the snowfall.

Many complained that they had to pay JD21 to get new meters, vital for keeping water flowing into their homes.

"Protecting water meters is a public responsibility, and citizens are partially responsible for helping keep water connected to taps in their residences," said one official. "We are not obliged to pay for repairing the metres if they

are damaged by frost."

Meanwhile, WAJ Secretary General Munther Khleifat on Friday urged the public to collect rainwater by using pipes leading from rooftops to underground wells or ground water tanks.

Noting that this was the traditional way of collecting water in Jordanian towns in the past, Mr. Khleifat said that due to the present chronic water problem, it has become necessary to resort to this method to harvest rainwater for domestic and agricultural purposes.

Cohen in Beijing for talks on military ties, proliferation

BEIJING (AFP) — U.S. Defence Secretary William Cohen arrived in Beijing Saturday to discuss burgeoning U.S.-Chinese military relations but also to press China's leaders not to supply anti-ship cruise missiles to Iran.

Mr. Cohen's three-day visit is the first by a U.S. defence secretary since 1994 and an effort by Washington to establish deeper military contacts with a rising power and potential future rival in Asia.

The Pentagon hopes more openness between the U.S. military and the Peoples Liberation Army will help "tear down some of the mistrust and suspicion." Mr. Cohen told reporters while enroute to Beijing.

"We're not engaged in trying to contain them. But we are determined to remain a pacific power, remain engaged, and we think that benefits them as well," Mr. Cohen said of China.

Mr. Cohen was expected to meet with most of China's top leadership for talks that U.S. defence officials said would begin preparations for the next U.S.-Chinese summit, which will focus on security issues.

He also is scheduled to visit the Beijing Air Defence Command Centre in Beijing — the first time an American has been allowed into the facility, which controls surface to air missiles protecting the Chinese capital.

Near the top of Mr. Cohen's list of U.S. concerns are arms proliferation issues, which a senior defence official said would be discussed intensively in the meetings that

Mr. Cohen will have in Beijing Monday.

At a recent U.S.-China summit, President Jiang Zemin assured President Bill Clinton that Beijing has "no intention" of selling more anti-ship cruise missiles to Tehran.

"We'd like to turn the summit statement of 'no intention' into a definite promise," the official said.

Mr. Cohen told reporters travelling with him that it was unclear whether past Chinese commitments and agreements related to sales of C-801 and C-802 anti-ship cruise missiles to Iran would continue.

"That has yet to be resolved," he said.

Mr. Cohen also will raise general nuclear non-proliferation concerns with regard to Iran and Pakistan. But Washington was most concerned about the cruise missiles because they pose a threat to U.S. warships in the Gulf, a senior official said.

On another Gulf issue, Mr. Cohen said he also expects to discuss the diplomatic disputes at the United Nations over Iraq in which China has opposed the use of force and tougher punitive actions sought by Washington.

The situation on the Korean Peninsula will come up and both sides will exchange views on the economic crisis that has battered South East Asia and South Korea.

Despite differences, U.S.-Chinese military relations appear to have turned a corner since March 1996 when two U.S. aircraft carriers were dispatched to the western Pacific in a showdown over the Taiwan Straits.

At nearly every stop on his swing through South

East Asia, Mr. Cohen has emphasised that Washington has no desire to contain China only to engage it as its might grows.

"Today, China is an Asian power, and rightfully so," Mr. Cohen said in a speech in Singapore this week. "The United States does not fear this, nor do we view China as an adversary. Rather we seek to encourage China to step forward as a responsible and cooperative great nation."

Washington, which severed military ties with Beijing after the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre, had virtually no military contacts with China at the time of the Taiwan Straits confrontation.

Since then, Washington has promoted a series of high-level military visits and hosted unprecedented ship visits to U.S. and Chinese ports in an effort to rebuild trust and encourage openness.

During his visit to Beijing, Mr. Cohen will sign an agreement on maritime "rules of the road" designed to prevent incidents at sea as the reach of the China's blue water navy expands.

The U.S. and Chinese officials also will sign off on a schedule of military visits this year, and begin sharing information on how they approach humanitarian missions.

There also will be broader discussions about the China's budget and what its goals and missions are, and Mr. Cohen will address the Academy of Military Sciences, the officials said.



U.S. Defence Secretary William Cohen answers reporters' questions at a news conference held at a hotel in Bangkok (Reuters photo)

'China prepared to talk with Taiwan without preconditions'

TAIPEI (AFP) — China is prepared to resume direct talks with Taiwan without preconditions, according to a group of top former U.S. officials here on an unofficial mission Saturday.

"The mainland intends to resume negotiations without any precondition attached," Chang King-Yuh, chairman of the cabinet-level Mainland Affairs Council, said he had been told by former U.S. Defence Secretary William Perry and other members of the mission which has just visited China.

The eight-member delegation did not discuss the details of their meeting with Chang.

The group, members of the think-tank National Committee on U.S.-China Relations, include former national security adviser Brent Scowcroft, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff John Shalikashvili and former Commander-in-Chief of Pacific Command Ronald Hays, together with staff.

They also met with Foreign Minister Jason Hu to discuss relations between Taipei, Washington and Beijing.

"It's good for Taiwan and Taipei-Beijing ties if U.S. relations with Communist China could be stabilised," said Mr. Hu after meeting with the mission.

Arriving late Friday the former U.S. officials are the highest-ranking unofficial U.S. mission to visit this nationalist island, the China Times said.

Taipei-Beijing talks were suspended in mid-1995 after Taiwanese President Lee Teng-Hui made a landmark visit to the United States.

The trip angered China, which regards Taiwan as a breakaway province, and viewed the visit as an attempt to seek formal independence.

The mission is due to meet Lee and Defence Minister Chiang Chung-Ling Monday, local newspapers reported. During their visit last week to China, the group met with high-ranking military officials including Defence Minister Chi Haotian and Chief of Staff Fu Quanyou to discuss ties with Taiwan. The mission's visit coincides with a trip to China by U.S. Secretary of Defence William Cohen, who arrived in Beijing Saturday.

China clamps down on hundreds of 'poorly run' publications

BEIJING (AFP) — China closed down 227 newspapers and 346 other periodicals last year, the official Xinhua news agency reported Saturday, citing officials at a national press and publications conference being held here.

"The move was to reduce the number of poorly run newspapers and periodicals, and only a few of them were shut down because of vio-

lating government rules and policies," the report said.

The country's censorship apparatus was very active during 1997.

Authorities closed down some 1,000 illegal wholesale book markets, confiscating tens of thousands of books with pornographic, violent or other banned content, it was revealed at the conference.

The report said

Communist Party-run newspapers increased their circulation during the year, led by Shanghai's Wenhui Daily, which increased its readership by 21 per cent.

The country's tightly-controlled press and publishing industry — like many other state-dominated sectors — is restructuring through mergers and streamlining initiatives to try and boost efficiency.

Japanese ambassador rules out further compensation for British ex-POWs

LONDON (AFP) — Japan will not reopen the question of direct cash compensation to British former prisoners of war, its ambassador to London, Saduyaki Hoyashi, reaffirmed Saturday.

Asked if Japan might be prepared to look again at the issue of compensation, Mr. Hoyashi said on BBC radio: "We are not. The question of compensation, I think, is closed... no matter what." He reaffirmed the Japanese view that the question of compensation was settled by the San Francisco Peace Treaty of

1951.

His comments came after British Prime Minister Tony Blair won a fresh apology from his Japanese counterpart Ryutaro Hashimoto for the ill treatment of British veterans. "I know many former POWs suffered immensely and their treatment was both immoral and inhumane," the Japanese ambassador to London said Saturday. But that was why Japan had done its best in the 1950s, paying compensation of 76 pounds (\$120) per POW, which was a substantial amount of money

then, he added.

He conceded that some British veterans still had hard feelings but he said: "I don't think it should damage the relations (between Britain and Japan)." Tokyo University's Professor Nobukazu Fujioka told the same programme that there should have been no apology to the British because Britain was the "aggressive invader of Asia" — not Japan — and because every country commits war crimes during war. "No country is innocent in this matter," he said.

Castro challenges Clinton to visit Cuba

HAVANA (AFP) — President Fidel Castro challenged U.S. President Bill Clinton early Saturday to visit Cuba, pointing out on national television that Pope John Paul II has dared to come to the Communist island.

Mr. Castro said that up to now no U.S. president has dared to visit the island because of the political backlash at home.

If Mr. Clinton decides to come to Cuba "we will not place the slightest objection," Mr. Castro said in an almost six-hour speech that began late Friday.

The main theme of Mr. Castro's presentation was the upcoming visit of Pope John Paul II, which begins Wednesday and ends on Jan. 25.

"The Pope dares to visit Cuba," Mr. Castro said, as he challenged Mr. Clinton.

Mr. Clinton faces stiff political opposition at home on any move to improve ties with Mr. Castro's regime, under a tight U.S. trade embargo for the past 36 years.

Friday Mr. Clinton froze for six months a provision known as Title III in the Helms-Burton act that would allow Americans whose properties were confiscated by Havana after 1959 to sue in U.S. courts foreign companies that now benefit from use of those properties.

Named after its congressional sponsors, U.S. sena-

tors Jesse Helms and Dan Burton, the legislation seeks to choke off investment to Cuba.

"The president has determined that the suspension... is necessary to the national interest and will in fact help expedite the transition to democracy in Cuba," White House spokesman Michael McCurry said.

Mr. McCurry said the Pope's visit could encourage ordinary Cubans to push for political change on the island.

"There could in fact be positive results in having the Holy Father in Cuba able to talk about the importance that the world attaches to human rights and to the need for relief of the suffering," he said.

"That discussion itself might empower those who believe there can be change and might even touch the heart of Fidel Castro," said Mr. McCurry.

Mr. McCurry however acknowledged that the pope would criticise the three-decade-old U.S. embargo on the Caribbean island nation.

"No doubt he will since he has those views, and we will respectfully accept his point of view, even if we must disagree," he added.

During the televised presentation Mr. Castro confidently asserted that the Pope's visit would not generate political problems for his government.

Bosnian Serb president offers new choice for premier

BANJA LUKA, Bosnia-Herzegovina (AFP) — Bosnian Serb President Biljana Plavsic nominated a new prime minister Saturday, amid mounting international pressure to form a cohesive government.

Ms. Plavsic proposed the 38-year-old head of the Independent Social Democratic Party (SNSD), Milorad Dodik, for the premiership, after her original choice, Mladen Ivanic, abandoned efforts to form a government.

Mr. Ivanic, a 39-year-old non-partisan economist, had given up his bid because he could not muster enough votes in parliament to back him.

Friday, the international mediator to Bosnia, Carlos Westendorp, told the Bosnian Serb political parties to stop bickering and warned that Saturday presented their "last chance" to form a government.

The ultra-nationalist Serb Democratic Party (SDS) and its ally the Radical Party (SRP) had blocked Mr. Ivanic's candidacy and have claimed the premiership and a majority of government posts for themselves.

Though they do not have an absolute majority, the ultranationalists form the largest bloc in the 83-seat parliament following elections last year.

Mr. Ivanic's bid had been backed by the international community and Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic.

Ms. Plavsic's nomination of Mr. Dodik came just hours before the Bosnian Serb parliament was due to meet in the northwestern city of Bijeljina.

Mr. Dodik, whose party has only two seats in the parliament, is bitterly opposed to the ultranationalist factions, and was an early backer of Ms. Plavsic.

He is a strong advocate of opening the Serb-run half of Bosnia to the international community, as well as pursuing market economic policies and a privatisation programme.

Sierra Leone junta offer amnesty to Kamajor militia

FREETOWN (AFP) — Sierra Leone's ruling junta offered a general amnesty Saturday to Kamajor militiamen in the south of the country, where they have been waging an effective guerrilla battle.

State radio said the amnesty declaration was made during a public address by the chief administrator of southern Sierra Leone, Captain Abubakarr Kamara.

"Misinformation has been responsible for creating the strife between Kamajors and government forces, leading to a series of armed clashes that have caused many deaths," Capt. Kamara said in Bo, the country's second largest city.

Observers here said it

was unlikely the Kamajors would accept the amnesty offer, which comes during a period of intense military build up by the militia group under the code name, "Operation Black December."

The Kamajors, with a force estimated at anything between 2,000 and 4,000, have remained loyal to ousted President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, whose elected government was overthrown in a military coup in May last year.

The group is currently led by Hinga Norman, who was deputy defence minister in the ousted government.

A senior military official reached in the southeast by telephone, admitted that the Kamajors posed

"a real threat."

"We are now in a situation, which if not contained quickly, could destabilise other parts of the country," he said.

The Kamajors, who are armed with modern assault rifles, as well as grenade and rocket launchers, have vowed to unseat the ruling junta and have made at least one attempt to capture Bo.

The feud between the Kamajors and the regular army dates back to before the coup.

Indeed, junta leader Lieutenant Colonel Johnny Paul Koroma, said privileges granted to the militia to the detriment of regular troops was one of the reasons for his seizing power.

ANC warns rightwingers over protests at Botha's court hearing

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) — The ruling African National Congress (ANC) Saturday warned white rightwingers not to interfere with its planned protest during the court appearance by former President PW Botha Friday.

ANC members planned to stage a "peaceful protest" outside the court, in the Western Cape resort town of George. ANC Regional Secretary Ismael Lavangee told Afrikaans-language Beeld newspaper.

But, he warned, "it will be a recipe for conflict if rightwing groups interfere with us."

Rightwingers have said they will turn up in their "thousands" to support 82-year-old Botha, who is being charged for refusing to appear before the country's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).

The ANC and its allies, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the South African Communist Party, were prepared for any confrontation with Mr. Botha's supporters, Mr. Lavangee said.

Spokesman for the white rightwing Freedom Front, which claims the prosecution of Mr. Botha is the beginning of persecution of Afrikaners by the ANC, shrugged off Mr. Lavangee's warning.

"We are not afraid of conflict," the spokesman, Pieter Mulder, said.

Freedom Front leader General Constand Viljoen, defence minister

in Mr. Botha's apartheid administration, and other rightwing leaders, among them Conservative Party chief Ferdi Hartzenberg, have said they plan to attend the hearing.

Police have said they will enforce tight security during the hearing, which is expected to be postponed after only brief procedural formalities.

The court case will, ironically, be presided over by a black magistrate, Victor Lugaju, who would never have been allowed to rise to that position under Mr. Botha's rule, which disenfranchised blacks and reserved senior government posts for whites.

Mr. Botha was served with a court summons on Jan. 7 after repeatedly refusing to testify to the TRC on his role as former head of the now-defunct State Security Council.

The council is accused of masterminding a brutal reign of terror in South Africa's black townships in the 1980s and of planning cross-border strikes by South Africa's apartheid defence force.

Mr. Botha ruled South Africa from 1978 until 1989, and came to be hated and feared by blacks for his iron-fisted enforcement of the apartheid system of racial segregation, which earned him the nickname "Great Crocodile."

The octogenarian recently announced his engagement to a vivacious hotelier 35 years his junior.

Former East German spymaster Markus Wolf freed

KARLSRUHE, Germany (AFP) — Former East German spymaster Markus Wolf, jailed Thursday for refusing to testify in an espionage trial dating from the cold war, was released Saturday, federal court spokesman Wolfgang Kruger said here.

Mr. Wolf, who was arrested in a Frankfurt courtroom and jailed in Darmstadt, 20 kilometres south of the city, had been taken Friday to the prison hospital as a precaution to ensure he received proper medication for his diabetes.

Mr. Wolf called his detention a continuation of the cold war. He had avoided imprisonment after two verdicts against him since the fall of the Berlin Wall, but

his luck seemed to have run out Thursday.

He was sentenced to six years in prison in 1993 for treason but in May 1995 the German constitutional court absolved from responsibility East German spies who did their work from East Germany.

He then received a two-year suspended sentence in May 1997 for kidnappings by his agents in West Germany during the cold war.

Mr. Wolf told the paper Neues Deutschland that he would not meet the court's demand to reveal the identity of an agent codenamed Julius, whom the court suspected might be former Social Democrat member of parliament Gerhard

Flaemig.

Mr. Wolf has pledged not to betray those who spied for him.

Mr. Flaemig has been on trial since September accused of having sent information from 1969 until the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 to the East German security apparatus, the Stasi, where Mr. Wolf directed the espionage service, the Hauptverwaltung Aufklärung (HVA).

A mythic figure of the cold war, Mr. Wolf headed the formidable East German spy apparatus from 1958 until his retirement in 1986. His speciality was infiltrating government and military circles in West Germany with a network estimated at more than 5,000 agents.

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In circles around Iraq

TENSION IS returning to the Gulf region. Once again there is a stand-off over the composition of the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) inspection units in Iraq and the deployment of American U-2 spy planes instead of Russian reconnaissance aircraft as Moscow has recently suggested. Due to the latest round of escalation, Britain is sending its own aircraft carrier to the waters of the Gulf to add military and political weight to the U.S. naval presence there. U.S. Secretary of Defence William Cohen has hinted that his country may use force against Iraq even unilaterally under certain compelling conditions.

Whether the new tug-of-war will be contained peacefully or it will end up in a military showdown, we cannot be sure. What we know, however, is that the last time there was a problem the stand-off was more serious and yet a confrontation did not take place.

This time the core issue may be essentially the same but the circumstances are somewhat different. The Iraqi authorities are objecting to the presence of nine Americans in the 15-member inspection group just as Baghdad did last time. On the other hand, the U.S. maintains that the expertise of the inspectors rather than their nationality should determine their participation.

What may be different, though, is that both Washington and London must have sensed an erosion during the past few months in the U.N. Security Council permanent members' apparent unity over what to do with Iraq. While the U.S. and Britain have been adamant about the need for Saddam Hussein's regime to toe the line drawn for him by their own explanations of the U.N. Security Council resolutions, Moscow, Paris and Beijing have been calling above all for restraint in dealing with Iraq and urging the adoption of a timetable for lifting the punitive sanctions slammed against it for the past seven-and-a-half years.

In any and all cases, what needs to be resolved once and for all is not the new-old dispute over the composition of the UNSCOM inspection units or the wrangling among the major powers over how to serve their own political interests. For one thing, neither the U.S. nor Iraq should make a big issue of the make-up of the inspection teams or over the flag of the spy plane that is supposed to make reconnaissance flights over the country. Both points of view strike us as amenable to compromise. There is no doubt that there are qualified Russian or French or Chinese inspectors who can carry out the necessary inspection duties just as well as the Americans. Besides, the resolution of the problem should not be made the central point around which the whole question of Iraq should revolve.

After so many years of conflict, instability and suffering, the debate should be over how the people of Iraq can have the chance to live again and for the country as a whole to survive against the odds of division, dependence and loss of integrity and sovereignty. It is unfair for Iraq and its people to continue to be subjugated to embargoes and boycotts that are hurting the innocent more than those responsible for the flare-up in the Gulf in 1990. The endless and futile searches in the Iraqi sands for a possible presence of biological or chemical weapons cannot go on indefinitely. Another formula should be devised for the resolution of not just this but all other outstanding questions. The parties should go beyond the point of deploying force for the settlement of the Iraqi case just as peaceful methods are ripe for deployment even at this late hour.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

FAHED FANEK, a writer for Al Ra'i, said Saturday that the U.S.'s list of countries encouraging terrorism should be topped by Israel whose actions throughout its history proved that it is a terrorist nation. Instead of having on the list countries like Syria and Iraq whom the U.S. accuses of encouraging terrorism and who were never proved to be of this nature, the U.S. should place the Jewish state which is known to have committed a long chain of terrorist actions against Arabs, foreigners and even Israelis. In Lebanon the Israelis under the Labour government committed a collective murder against civilians taking refuge in the U.N. compound. In Israel the former Labour leader Shimon Peres ordered the assassination of Yahya Ayyash, Hamas' master bomb maker who spearheaded efforts to fight Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories; the former Israeli Premier Yitzhak Rabin ordered the assassination of Fathi Shiqqui, head of the Islamic Jihad, in Malta; and the founders of the Jewish state like Ben-Gurion and Sharmir have been condemned by the world for their terrorist attacks in Palestine and their blowing up of the King David Hotel and for massacring women and children in Deir Yassin. The writer said that one of the most striking examples manifesting Israel's terrorist nature was the Israeli attempt to assassinate Khaled Misha'al, the head of the Hamas bureau in Amman. Despite these actions, and following the attack on Misha'al in Amman, said the writer, Netanyahu's popularity rose in Israel. He said this means that the whole Israeli society is inclined towards terrorism.

AL DUSTOUR daily on Saturday hailed a decision by the European Union which called for a reconsideration of the European-Israeli dialogue because such dialogue has not achieved any progress in the peace process. The paper said that the European declaration has rightly pointed out the deadlocked peace process and the deterioration of the situation in the Middle East due to Israel's refusal to implement the peace accords. The Europeans have demanded that Israel end its siege of Palestinian territories, remove restrictions on trade and remove the causes of tension which are leading the region towards violence, according to the paper. In their declaration the Europeans have stressed that the parties who continue to finance projects of peace cannot stand idle and watch the Israelis ruin the chances of permanent peace. The paper continued, The U.S. which has so far excluded Europe from taking active part in the peace process, should now admit its failure and should open the way for the Europeans, a move which has become vital if the peace process is to be salvaged, demanded the paper. It expressed hope that Europe will back its declaration with practical actions since it holds elements of pressure to be exercised on the Jewish state.

Sunday's Economic Pulse

A budget dictated by circumstances

A BUDGET normally represents a financial translation of a particular government's policies and plans for a coming year. Not so in Jordan, where the budget hardly differs from one government to another.

Budgets in Jordan are dictated by the surrounding circumstances and the available resources in a given year. Has the budget for 1998 been prepared by the previous government or the coming government it would not be different in a substantial manner.

So much so that change of Jordanian governments, or their reshuffle takes place immediately after the budget is approved by the Parliament. A new government would be happy with a ready budget, and have no problem in acting according to the plans laid by another government.

A finance minister in a developed country will usually draft the budget by listing the accessory expenditures and programmes to be implemented in the fiscal year, then he will plan for raising the money needed to finance the envisaged expenditures and programmes. In our case the minister of finance will first identify the financial resources that he can mobilise, and then would allow as much expenditure as the volume of revenues allows. The figure representing the bottom line i.e., the deficit may be

decided in advance.

When the current economic adjustment programme agreed with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) was put into work in late 1991, the public expenditure used to form 40 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP). This is a very high percentage in a country that boasts a free market economy. The programme aimed, among other things, to reduce the share of GDP that goes to the central government. In terms of GDP, the programme was successful in reducing the size of the budget since 1991 by around one percentage point a year. The budget, of course, continued to grow but at a slower pace than the growth of the economy as a whole, a sign considered healthy according to the so-called Washington consensus.

The fact that Jordan is adhering to an IMF programme should, in itself, guarantee a measure of complementarity between the fiscal policy and the monetary policy. However, this is hardly the case. For good or bad, the two policies are extremely independent of each other. Since fiscal policy is dictated by domestic, regional, and international circumstances, it is the duty of the monetary policy to take into account what is happening on the budget front. While the governor of the Central Bank is worried

about foreign exchange reserves, inflation and liquidity, the minister of finance can't care less about the theoretical concepts. He only worries about the deficit and debt management, he tries to make ends meet.

Jordan's budget for 1998 amounts to JD1.987 million (\$2.8 billion) of which only 9.4 per cent will be in the form of foreign grants. The progress towards financial self-sufficiency is demonstrated by the fact that domestic revenue covers all recurrent expenditures plus 77 per cent of capital expenditures.

As far as debt service is concerned, all interest will be paid out of domestic revenue being classified in the budget as current expenditure, but all principal amounts plus some \$50 million will be paid by drawing on fresh loans. The outstanding debt will thus remain the same with a slight increase in absolute figures, but it will continue to decline as a percentage of GDP to become in the range of 85 per cent. This percentage excludes short-term debt and all the indebtedness of the private sector if it is not guaranteed by the government. However, foreign debt unaccounted for is not much.

Indonesia: The real meaning of 'meltdown'

By Gwynne Dyer

"I DECLARE my determination to become the leader of our nation and our people, if this is indeed the consensus of our people." — Megawati Sukarnoputri, 10 January 1997

It finally took a woman, the daughter of Indonesia's first president, to challenge openly the man who has ruled the country since 1967. By doing so, she may have set long-overdue changes in motion in Indonesia. But in the midst of the great Asian financial crisis, she is scaring the pants off the people who think they're in charge of the world economy.

Six weeks ago, when I was last in Jakarta, it seemed like the same conversation almost every evening. The second bottle of cognac or claret would arrive at the table, and some worried member of Indonesia's interlocking political/commercial/military/media elites would start reciting the farewell speech they should make to President Suharto: "Thank you for your services. Your family's interests will be protected. But it's really time to let go."

They weren't afraid of being reported to Suharto or his 'family' (who control up to 10 per cent of the national economy). Indonesia is not that sort of police state, and besides the elites all went to the same schools. They all agreed that while Suharto may have served the nation's interests 30 years ago, he is now long past his sell-by date, and doing the country positive harm.

But they couldn't bring themselves to bell the cat. Amidst many references to Javanese court traditions, they would confess that they couldn't imagine telling the 'old man' it was time to go. So they were resigned to Suharto winning the March 10 presidential election, and going on to a seventh 5-year term of office.

At that point, the Indonesian rupiah, having halved in value since September, was trading at around 5,000 to the dollar.

Three weeks ago, there was a major health scare about Suharto. Returning from a round-the-world trip, the 76-year-old Indonesian president succumbed to extreme fatigue and cancelled all his appointments for 10 days.

Confronted with the concrete prospect of Suharto's absence, Indonesians and foreign analysts alike suddenly concluded that they couldn't possibly do without him. The Indonesian stock market and currency didn't stabilise until he reappeared.

At that point, the rupiah had fallen to around 7,000 to the dollar.

Then last week, Suharto's government published its budget for next year — and it was the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and sundry others that panicked. For Suharto, concerned by street demos in Indonesia's big cities (where 4 million people have lost their jobs in the past few months), had broken most of the promises he had made to the IMF about cutting subsidies, balancing the budget, and restructuring the economy.

The IMF has committed \$23 billion to

help Indonesia meet its short-term foreign debts, and some of the money has already been handed over. Basically, Suharto was gambling that in breaking his end of the bargain he could call the IMF's bluff, because it wouldn't dare let the world's fourth most populous country choose the only other option: defaulting on its debt.

The rupiah and the Indonesian stock market went into another vertical fall: by Friday, the rupiah was 10,000 to the dollar. U.S. President Bill Clinton called Suharto from Air Force One, urging him to think things over. Two IMF officials and U.S. Deputy Treasury Secretary Lawrence Summers scrambled into the air and flew to Jakarta for a closer look at the threat.

And Megawati Sukarnoputri, at a ceremony marking the 25th anniversary of the Indonesian Democratic Party, declared herself a candidate for Suharto's job. If she doesn't get it, somebody else probably will. All bets are off in Indonesia now, as influential people and groups become convinced that stability cannot be restored so long as Suharto and his family hang on.

This is basically good news for Indonesia, even if it feels like bad timing. After all, democratic change was unlikely to begin until the Indonesian 'economic miracle' lost some of its shine. The problem is the rest of the world.

Suharto's government is playing 'chicken' with the IMF, implicitly threatening to default unless it gets away with breaking the agreement. If it falls, then a new democratic government — or a military regime, if it

comes to that — will need all the popular support it can get, and is almost bound to declare a moratorium on its foreign debts. This is when the ride gets exciting, for Indonesia is not the only Asian country facing this temptation.

The IMF has demanded spending cuts, bankruptcies and wholesale restructuring as the price of its Asian bail-outs. But on the other side there is resentment at foreign interference, the resistance of entrenched interests — and the ever-present option to just default on the loans. South Korea came close in December, and Thailand is now talking about renegotiating its IMF deal.

Indonesia's total foreign debt is \$133 billion. South Korea's is close to \$160 billion. Add the Philippines, Malaysia, and Thailand, and the total amount of debt that might be defaulted on, if the Indonesian slide takes its Asian neighbours with it, is around \$400 billion.

That's a large wad of money. It gets a lot bigger when you recall that banks have to keep capital equal to 8 per cent of their loans. If they must write off \$400 billion in bad debts, that money comes right out of their capital reserves — which means that they must call in \$5 trillion in other loans to restore the legal ratio.

At that point, Asia's problems become everybody's problems, as the entire global economy tumbles out of control. But don't let me depress you.

Mideast peace process: Three options for Clinton

By Thomas L. Friedman

M. KAHIL

WASHINGTON — Next week Benjamin Netanyahu and Yasser Arafat will visit Washington in the latest last-ditch effort to revive the peace process. Bill Clinton will have the opportunity to make some very clear choices. Let us hope he is up to it.

In preparation for these visits, the United States asked Israelis and Palestinians to do two things. Israel was asked to produce a plan for the second phase of redeployment, obligated under the Oslo accords, that would turn over to Palestinian control an additional 12 to 15 per cent of the West Bank.

The Palestinians were asked to sit with the CIA and the Israeli military and work out a mutually acceptable plan for ensuring Israeli and Palestinian security as a prelude to final-status talks.

According to the Israeli press, the Palestinians, the CIA and the Israeli military worked out a draft security plan last month that was satisfactory to Israel's generals, but it was rejected by Prime Minister Netanyahu, partly on grounds that it required Israel to deal with its own "extremists" (radical settlers), which created political problems for Mr. Netanyahu, and partly because he did not want to have the pressure of an acceptable security framework having been worked out by his own generals and the Palestinians at a time when he was having problems producing his withdrawal side of the bargain.

In any event, Mr. Netanyahu is expected to bring a plan that will include something in the 10 per cent range of an Israeli withdrawal — not bad — but laden with political conditions.

He apparently wants a five-month hiatus before any withdrawal, during which Palestinian commitments on security, as well as a host of other political demands (such as toning down anti-Israeli Palestinian rhetoric), will be tested. Then, after the five months, the Israeli cabinet would vote on whether it thinks the Palestinians have met Israel's demands for "reciprocity." If not, no withdrawal. That means that any cabinet member could scuttle the deal.

How should the United States respond? It has three options.

Option 1: Work with whatever Mr.



Netanyahu brings. He says this is all he can get out of his fragile coalition. Fine, let us try to sell it to Chairman Arafat.

But to sell it to Mr. Arafat, the United States just cannot say that this is all Mr. Netanyahu can offer, take it or leave it. That would go nowhere and would undermine U.S. credibility. Both Mr. Netanyahu's and Mr. Arafat's political concerns should be addressed.

Therefore, the United States should propose a phased withdrawal. Israel should withdraw 2 per cent in the first month in return for Palestinian completion of the security accord; 2 per cent in month two in return for Palestinians' rewriting of their covenant; 2 per cent in month three, etc. Reciprocity for reciprocity.

And both sides should desist from unilateral steps, whether it is Israeli settlements, Palestinian activities in Jerusalem or efforts to delegitimise the other, that will upset the programme. (Mr. Netanyahu delegitimises Mr. Arafat as much as Mr. Arafat smears him. Both need to stop. Reciprocity for reciprocity.) The whole idea is to build an environment that would give final-status talks a chance to succeed.

If Mr. Netanyahu is serious about reciprocity and living up to his commitments, this plan could work. If Mr. Arafat is serious

about getting quickly to final-status talks and living up to his commitments, this plan could work.

Option 2: The United States concludes that the gap between Mr. Netanyahu and Mr. Arafat is unbridgeable. In this case, it should declare publicly what it believes would be a fair deal: A second-phase withdrawal in the 10 per cent range, a time-out in Israeli settlement building, and a Palestinian-Israeli security accord that meets the legitimate demands of the Israeli cabinet. If the parties want to walk away from that, then the United States will walk away from the peace process, leaving the parties on their own.

No doubt in the short run both Mr. Netanyahu and Mr. Arafat would try to spin such a U.S. walkout to their political advantage. But in the long run neither man can afford to stand before his people, naked, alienated from the United States and without any peace process. Trust me.

Option 3: Mr. Clinton fumes in private, says nothing in public and proceeds with a peace process he knows will go nowhere.

God save us from Option 3.

LETTERS

'I have had enough'

This is an open letter to any organisation protecting animals in this country

To the Editor:

ANIMALS IN this country are treated abominably on a daily basis. I have seen often how donkeys and other animals are treated. A crippled bag of bones that barely resembles a horse being beaten mercilessly as it struggled to pull a cart load of heating fuel. Why do I so often see children beating a donkey as they go from house to house collecting old bread and food. I suppose that one could say that if these children were in school, as they should be, then they just might learn that animals are not around just to be cruelly abused. Therefore I urge these people who give to these children to say something. Often the children are not beating the defenceless creature to make it move but they do it as they stand chatting together. I called to them on numerous occasions saying this is *haram* hoping that they will stop but the response was just a stream of abuse and laughter as if I was mad to say such thing. Surely more of us in Jordan, when seeing this abuse of one of God's creatures on our streets, should be prepared to do something.

A few weeks ago, on a back street in Aqaba I discovered a group of children gleefully stoning a puppy. My intervention probably saved this tiny dog from a painful death. Why do so many of us see this happening on a daily basis and choose to ignore it? Should we not be more caring about animals as Muslims especially in Ramadan or is the often heard cliché true that we don't care about people so why should we care about animals.

In case there is an organisation in Jordan that is concerned with animal welfare I am sure that there are concerned people who would appreciate an address and phone-fax number

Arafah Al Ashi
Amman

Women's place at prayer sparks debate on Turkish Islam

By Susanne Gusten
Agence France Presse

ISTANBUL — A mufti in the Aegean town of Izmir has inadvertently sparked a fiery debate in Turkey that could redefine relations between religion and state in this predominantly Muslim but secularly governed country.

"I really didn't mean to cause all this fuss," said Nadir Kuru, mufti of Izmir's Karsiyaka district, who sparked an uproar with an invitation to women present at a recent funeral to join the men in prayer.

"I just couldn't bear to see the women crying off in a corner," he said. But his kindly gesture has set off a public debate about a specific Turkish form of Islam suited to a secular country, where women enjoy equal rights in the political sphere.

In Turkey, muftis, who are local religious leaders, are appointed by the state through the Department of Religious Affairs.

The storm coincided with an expected Constitutional Court ruling on whether or not to dissolve the Islamic Welfare Party, amid efforts by the state to win back some of the Islamic-based vote.

State prosecutors have charged Welfare with attempting to overthrow Turkey's secular regime and seek its closure, after a one-year term last year by the first Islamist prime

minister, Welfare's Necmettin Erbakan, was marred by major rows with the army generals over what they saw as creeping Islamisation.

The daily *Hurriyet* dubbed Kuru the "Taboo-breaking Mufti" over the incident, in which he admitted women to the first row of mourners at the funeral prayer.

Among the first to lend support to this breach of tradition was the government's Department of Religious Affairs.

And a day after the controversial funeral in Izmir, Turkey's President Suleyman Demirel attended a funeral in Ankara where a woman also stood in the front row.

The Department of Religious Affairs took things one step further on Wednesday by suggesting that women should also be admitted to Friday prayers and to the special prayers marking the end of the fasting month of Ramadan, up to now off limits to them.

"There is no law in the Koran or in Islam prohibiting women from joining in these prayers," said the head of the department, Mehmet Nuri Yilmaz, in a statement carried by the semi-official Turkish news agency Anatolia.

Yilmaz called on women to take part in the prayers ending Ramadan at sunrise on Jan. 29 in Ankara. The call for reform is

also supported by the dean of the Theological Faculty at the University of Istanbul, Yasar Nuri Ozturk.

"Women can join in the funeral prayer as well as Friday and Ramadan prayers," Ozturk said. "This was the practice in the lifetime of the Prophet."

In the public debate, a columnist pointed to "the principles of Turkish Islam handed down from the Ottomans." These included that rules and traditions should change with the times, she wrote.

"Women are not second-class citizens or treated as objects in Turkish culture," wrote another columnist in *Hurriyet* on Wednesday.

"Turks have stopped being led by the Arabs, they are finding their own interpretations of Islam."

But such a breach with tradition has found sharp criticism, especially from the conservative clergy and traditional circles.

"When you move your head while praying, you see women," objected the mufti of Bilecik, Necdet Cetin. "This is not appropriate."

Not all the critics are as soft-spoken. "I have received numerous threatening telephone calls," Mufti Nadir Kuru reported. "But I have not asked for protection," he added. "My life was given me by Allah."



People watch a new poster showing a truck driver holding a condom. This poster is part of the campaign of prevention against AIDS which started January 15 in Ivory Coast. Fourteen other posters will be displayed along the road between Abidjan and Ouagadougou (AFP photo)

Ivory Coast AIDS awareness campaign hits the road, literally

By Michele Leridon
Agence France Presse

ABIDJAN — Condom-vending machines and posters advising "Your rubber is your brother" are set to be common sights on Ivorian roads, as health officials target truck drivers in their latest campaign to fight the AIDS epidemic.

"Truck drivers are a particularly vulnerable group," Ivorian Health Minister Maurice Guikahue, who launched the campaign, said Thursday, as health workers gave condom demonstrations using wooden phalluses.

"They travel for long periods away from their

regular partner in a tempting environment," explained Guikahue, who hopes the West African campaign will reduce infection rates reaching 11 per cent of the population in Ivory Coast and seven per cent in neighbouring Burkina Faso.

"There are whole towns which only come alive at night, when the drivers arrive. But it's not just the drivers, it's young (female) vendors of water, sweets and bread that we need to protect," said the minister.

Guikahue unveiled the first of 15 posters lining the route from Abidjan to Burkina's capital Oua-

gadougou showing a smiling driver brandishing a packet of the well-known Prudence brand condoms.

The poster is captioned: "Have a nice journey, watch out for AIDS."

The poster's hero, "My friend K," also appears on radio and television, where he recounts his international adventures with his apprentices, Brahim and Adama, who spend much time ogling young vendors.

Condom machines are due to appear on main roads in coming months. Drivers will receive training and will be encouraged to spread the word about the values of

"faithfulness, abstinence, or, in the case of unendurable temptation, condom use."

At the launch ceremony in Attécoubé, on the outskirts of Abidjan, actors performed a playlet set in a truckstop complete with tempting orange-sellers, a highway playboy "with a girl in every town" and his boss.

To an audience of smiling truckers and policemen, the boss used a wooden phallus to show how to put on a condom. He also explained that "even pretty, chubby girls can have AIDS."

Some of the drivers "who have lost friends that way" said they

would take the necessary precautions.

But others claimed "not to trust this AIDS thing."

"You can't feel anything with a condom," insisted Kone Siriki, who said he is a big hit with the girls because he is "a good-looking, charming guy."

He became less cocky when the conversation turned to testing for the HIV virus. "That scares me. If they said I had AIDS, I wouldn't be able to sleep," he said.

Other campaigns for the road to Mali are in the pipeline.

Cheaper driving could put more Americans in diesel cars

By Martha Hindes
Agence France Presse

DETROIT, Michigan — Economics, according to industry experts, are likely to determine whether diesel versions of Volkswagen's (VW) new Beetle compact car will appeal to U.S. buyers.

Diesel engines, while long popular in Europe, have been virtually ignored by U.S. drivers who have not faced the high fuel costs found in other countries.

Diesels were one of the technologies spotlighted by several automakers in the opening days of the North American International Auto Show, which runs through Jan. 19 in Detroit.

New diesel technology is considered a critical element in many hybrid fuel research programmes now underway. But it could take considerable effort to convince fickle American consumers to switch to diesel-powered vehicles, which have primarily been used for heavy-duty work in tractors and semi-trucks.

Their only brief acceptance in passenger vehicles was during the energy crises of the 1970s. That's when drivers were faced with the rarity of long lines at filling stations and steeply rising fuel prices.

Most Americans have bad memories about diesel engines, usually associating them with old trucks and buses that belched thick, smelly, black smoke, or with diesel cars that had agonisingly slow acceleration.

Today's diesels are a brand new product, said Peter Hartzell, light-duty engine spokesman for diesel manufacturer Cummins Engine Co. "They're clean. They're not the ones people remember from the 70s."

VW is one of the companies that soon could begin selling diesel versions of its vehicles in the U.S. Mercedes-Benz is adding a diesel engine to its U.S.-built, M-Class sport utility vehicle it will export to Europe, but has not yet decided if it will sell that version in America.

VW's 1.9 litre turbo, direct injection diesel (TDI) that delivers about 90 horse power will go in about 10 per cent of its new Beetles to be built in Mexico. The company has not yet determined how many of those will be included in the 50,000 Beetles slated for the U.S. market, according to VW spokesman Tony Foulds.

A diesel Beetle probably would have about a \$1,200 premium over the cost of the gasoline version, said Mr. Hartzell. But diesel engines have nearly three times the durability and cost much less to operate, he added.

Diesel technology also is playing a major role in developing fuel efficient, ultra low emissions vehicles of the future, partly because they do not depend on spark plugs and the fuel burns more efficiently.

The Big Three automakers in the U.S. — Ford, General Motors and Chrysler — are under a government approved cooperative effort called Partnership

for a New Generation of Vehicles (PNGV), are exploring the possibility of using hybrid diesel engines paired with small electric motors in production vehicles as early as 2003.

Although diesel engines emit some microscopic pollutants called particulates, they can help reduce greenhouse gases such as nitrogen oxides that contribute heavily to smog.

That was one of the key concerns at the Kyoto conference on air quality late last year. "What contributes to greenhouse gases are hydrocarbons," said Mr. Hartzell. "So gasoline is bad and diesels are better."

Added Mercedes-Benz spokesman Fred Heiler: "Basically a diesel engine makes more soot than gasoline. But they make a whole lot less than everything else."

Mercedes-Benz is the leader in diesel passenger cars worldwide, he added. "We invented them ... We could begin shifting our mix from gasoline to diesel relatively quickly and painlessly" for the U.S. market.

Although diesels have increased dramatically in performance during the past few years, a major benefit for Americans would more likely be the cheaper cost of operation, said Mr. Heiler.

"For most people interested in a diesel, power is not a priority. Fuel economy is," he said. "A number of them are more interested in how many days or weeks they can drive before they have to fill up."

German museum asks Louvre to return 'war booty'

By Laurent Lozano
Agence France Presse

WUPPERTAL — It all started when a stray fax landed "by mistake" on the director's desk last year and prompted a small German art museum to challenge the world-famous Louvre to return its "war booty."

Some 15 paintings, including works by masters such as Renoir, Delacroix and Ingres, had gone missing from the Von der Heydt Museum — formerly known as the Elberfeld Museum — since the end of World War II.

They were seized by Allied forces, but never broke its silence nor attempted to locate or recover them out of a combination of post-war guilt and reconciliation, museum director Sabine Fehlemann said.

But the memory haunted those who had known and regretted the loss of such works as "The Bathing" by Renoir, a picture of an Arab officer and another of a jeweller salesman by Delacroix. "Head of

Zeus" by Ingres and "Camaret's Door" by Boudin.

They were thought to have vanished in the chaos of the war, like 220 other former possessions of the museum, including 180 confiscated by the Nazis who deemed them "degenerate."

Then in early 1997 a fax arrived at the Von der Heydt Museum "by mistake," said Fehlemann.

It had been sent by the Louvre museum in the French capital and detailed a painting of a nude woman by Renoir. Fehlemann immediately went to Paris to have a closer look. A label on the back of the work's frame was marked: "From the Koblenz warehouse — sold by Bignon for 150,000 francs to the Wuppertal museum — second convey Baden-Baden."

The museum director was elated. For her this was part of the museum's property that had been seized by French troops stationed in Koblenz from a storage

warehouse where it had been placed to escape air raids.

She soon found other lost paintings in the Louvre bearing labels indicating their provenance, or on the French museum's Internet site.

But now a new battle arose over whether the Wuppertal museum's paintings had in fact originally come from France, having been looted from there during the Nazi occupation.

Fehlemann says no, but the French museum board, the Direction des Musées Nationaux, says yes.

"Between 1944 and 1949," said French museums spokesman Robert Fohr, "61,000 paintings and artworks from France were recovered by the Allies."

"More than 45,000 were returned to their owners and 13,000 without artistic value sold, while the museum board took over the remaining 2,000 which are exhibited in French museums," Fohr said.

These 2,000 orphaned works today are consid-

ered "spoils of war," a term that strikes a raw nerve in Germany, which has been negotiating for years to recover a huge amount of property amassed by the Soviet army of occupation.

Fohr said most of the 2,000 works were bought on the Parisian art market during the Nazi occupation of France for German museums or collectors, including dictator Adolf Hitler, airforce chief Hermann Goering and Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop.

The transactions thus fall under an agreement adopted by Allied forces in 1943 that annuls all transactions conducted on occupied territory, even those with a semblance of legality, he said.

Fohr said it was to silence "malevolent rumours" that France displayed these artworks in several exhibitions in 1997.

Fehlemann, however, insists that certain paintings were bought before the Nazi occupation in France, and others were

not bought by Nazis.

Fohr retorts that the matter is one to be dealt with on a government level, and so far no official state-to-state claim has been filed.

In a message on Jan. 2, the German interior ministry urged Fehlemann to show "patience," insisting the legality of the problem must be studied first.

Fehlemann said she took this as meaning "don't upset the neighbours." But she is not holding a grudge, and pending further action, has agreed to lend works by Leger and by Van Gogh for exhibitions in France.

The German museum's claims coincide with speculation on the findings of a French government committee on the seizure of Jewish assets in France during the war.

The committee's most spectacular conclusions are expected to touch on the restitution of some 2,000 orphaned artworks sent to French museums after the war from Germany.

Bonn offers Jordan best terms for debt rescheduling

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordan and Germany have concluded a \$54 million (DM94 million) debt rescheduling agreement, the fourth such an accord between the two countries since 1989, Odeh Sweiss, director of the finance department at the Ministry of Finance, announced Saturday.

Dr. Sweiss, who led a three-member Jordanian team to negotiate with their German counterparts in Bonn last week, said the accord was "the best agreement the Kingdom has managed to secure

with Germany."

The Jordanian delegation included two officials from the Finance Ministry and a third from the Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ).

Two members of the Jordanian embassy in Bonn joined the delegation during their talks with German officials, Dr. Sweiss added.

The deal stipulates rescheduling DM 90 million from the mutual loans at 2.70 per cent interest, down from rate 2.7 per cent.

He added that the other DM 4 million, part of the export loans given to the Kingdom, were resched-

uled at an interest rate of seven per cent, down from 8.15 per cent.

The rescheduled amount is about 13 per cent of the total debt to Germany, which amounts to \$405 million, Dr. Sweiss added.

The agreement allows the Kingdom to swap the DM 94 million to finance local projects in the Kingdom, especially those related to water, environment and the social safety package projects, with a 50 per cent rate of redemption.

"This is the best agreement we could secure from Germany since the first rescheduling agree-

ment in 1989," Dr. Sweiss told the Jordan Times. "The best in all terms especially in the interest rate conditions."

"According to the agreement, every dollar we spend to finance local projects will be doubled by the German government," indicated Dr. Sweiss.

"This means that the DM 94 million could be used for financing local projects in the country so we will not be obliged to repay the amount with additional interest," the finance ministry official explained.

Such an agreement will enhance the balance of

payments of the Kingdom as it will exempt Jordan from repaying the debt and interest.

"We have enough projects for the water sector as well as the social safety package and we would be able to fully use the amount to finance these projects," Dr. Sweiss said.

He added that another

round of negotiations will be conducted next year to reschedule another amount of the German debt.

Dr. Sweiss said the Kingdom is expected to launch talks with Italy and Canada to reschedule its some of its debts to these countries. He did not give a date for these talks.

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Study: Government pricing hindered growth of 5 major Jordanian firms

By Ghailia Alul
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Jordan's top five state-run companies have earned a total net profit of JD 69 million in 1996, according to a study released by the Amman Chamber of Industry on Saturday.

But the study covering the Jordan Phosphate Mines Company, the Jordan Petroleum Refinery, the Jordan Cement Factories, the Arab Potash Company, and the Jordanian Electric Power Company (JEPCO), said profits did not reach aspired levels because of government intervention in pricing.

Government pricing hindered the growth of the five companies whose total capital stood at JD231 million — accounting for 40 per cent of the capital of industrial public shareholding firms, the study said.

These companies are run and operated under government concession, with the government signing most international agreements for them and fixing their prices.

Their assets of JD1.431 billion accounted for 70 per cent of the assets of Jordan's industrial public shareholding companies estimated at JD2 billion.

According to the study, the five companies paid the government a total of JD152.5 million in taxes and duties in 1996 — more than the amount they spent on employee wages.

The figure, the study added, accounted for 45 per cent of total spending on wages of civil servants which reached JD336 mil-

lion. Three of the five companies provided Jordanians with their needs of petroleum and its by-products as well as electricity.

The rest are major hard currency earners from exports of potash and phosphates that reached JD293 million in 1996 — accounting for 30 per cent of national exports.

The five companies also represent a leading example of joint investments as Arab individuals and companies own 41 per cent of the capital of the Arab Potash Co, 17 per cent of the Jordan Petroleum Refinery and 19 per cent of the Jordan Phosphate Mines Company.



The phosphate firm has also signed contracts worth millions of dollars with India, Pakistan, and Japan to produce fertilizers and to utilize Dead Sea salts.

The five companies have a total of 108,000 shareholders.

Government institutions own 14.8 per cent of the shares of the Jordan Phosphate Mines Co, 17.4 per cent of the Jordan Petroleum Refinery shares, 55.8 per cent of the shares of both the Arab Potash and Jordan Cement companies.

According to the study, there was no private sector that had the necessary capital and experience to set up such companies providing strategic services for Jordan when those companies were founded.

The Jordan Petroleum Refinery is the only company in the Arab World with private sector shareholding.

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET												
HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - SHEIKHAN												
TELEPHONE: 507171 / 507179												
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SATURDAY 17/01/1998												
PAST 12 MONTHS HIGH	PAST 12 MONTHS LOW	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF TRANS.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE		
346.000	250.000	ARAB BANK	14.8	1.24	3	180	50800	323.75	322.50	1.25-		
N 2.340	1.680	JOR. NATIONAL BK.	5	0.00	1	250	453	1.80	1.81	.01+		
1.540	1.600	BANK OF JORDAN	4.9	0.00	1	1350	2437	1.60	1.54	.06-		
1.300	.890	MID. EAST INV. BK.	67.0	0.00	2	2250	2295	1.00	1.02	.02+		
5.240	1.650	INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK.	10.5	5.97	18	52250	91353	1.70	1.75	.05+		
1.610	1.410	THE HOUSING BK.	15.5	3.72	1	250	1300	5.20	5.20	-		
4.180	1.850	JOR. KUMAT BANK	10.7	0.00	1	100	201	2.00	2.01	.01+		
.980	.620	JOR. GULF BANK	4.0	10.45	6	10400	6968	.67	.67	-		
4.050	2.150	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	12.1	4.03	3	250	595	2.38	2.38	-		
1.530	1.070	UNION BK. SAV. INV.	7	0.00	1	1850	1998	1.08	1.08	-		
1.750	.870	BEIT AL-HAL (BEITNA)	.5	17.24	1	500	435	.87	.87	-		
BANK SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 230.36 %CHG: -0.26		44	69830	166104					
2.100	1.590	JOR. FRENCH INSUR.	5.8	7.35	1	1000	2040	2.04	2.04	-		
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 121.06 %CHG: 0.00		1	1000	2040					
2.050	1.550	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	9.4	5.15	14	2600	5040	1.94	1.94	-		
3.560	2.450	STERN MINERALS	18.3	4.31	2	1810	1828	3.45	3.42	.03+		
1.950	.930	NATL. PORTFOLIO	9	0.00	4	1350	1299	1.01	1.03	.02+		
1.650	.410	JORDAN INTL. TRAD.	23.1	0.00	2	1750	758	.45	.45	-		
1.590	1.150	MID. EAST HOTELS	18.3	0.00	2	600	720	1.20	1.20	-		
4.000	2.890	ARAB INTL. INV. EDUC.	10.4	0.00	16	20300	81095	3.94	4.00	.06+		
1.090	.900	ZAKKA EDUCATION	9	0.00	2	1000	950	.95	.95	-		
2.170	1.630	UNIFIED CO.	8.0	6.51	5	2000	3380	1.69	1.69	-		
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 117.25 %CHG: +0.39		47	31210	99170					
4.450	2.750	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	20.1	3.69	7	1229	3656	3.01	2.98	.03-		
11.160	9.200	JOR. PETROL. REFINERY	10.2	8.46	12	1685	17703	10.58	10.51	.07-		
4.700	3.440	ARAB PHARM. MANF.	11.8	4.67	11	3318	14200	4.30	4.28	.02-		
2.250	1.410	JORDAN DAIRY	9.4	8.73	1	300	840	2.83	2.80	.03-		
3.650	2.220	ARAB FOOD. IND.	10.6	10.64	1	50	118	2.40	2.35	.05-		
.630	.440	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	9.7	0.00	8	5500	2530	.46	.46	-		
1.140	.370	INTERMED. PETRO. CHEM.	9	0.00	35	21800	9880	.45	.45	-		
.820	.530	JOR. SULFUR CHEM.	9	0.00	6	850	502	.59	.59	-		
1.610	1.150	ARAB PHARM. CHEM.	15.3	5.93	4	1000	1180	1.18	1.18	-		
1.800	.820	UNIV. MOD. INDUS.	9	.25	7	2050	1763	.86	.86	-		
1.410	.890	JOR. INDUS. RESOURCES	9	13.89	6	1265	903	.72	.72	-		
.960	.810	UNION INV. SOF.	16.5	0.00	9	4200	3780	.90	.90	-		
1.970	1.340	EL -RAY READY WEAR	50.0	0.00	2	2000	2870	1.47	1.42	.05-		
1.300	1.080	INTL. TOBACCO	6.6	0.00	1	700	847	1.20	1.21	.01+		
.810	.710	JORDAN STEEL	32.6	8.94	12	41250	29772	.73	.72	.02-		
.840	.570	MID. EAST COMPLEX	7.6	16.13	10	10050	6234	.64	.62	.02-		
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 111.78 %CHG: -0.31		132	97347	96776					
GRAND TOTAL			INDEX: 166.44 %CHG: -0.24		224	199387	364090					
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SATURDAY 17/01/1998												
N 1,000	1,000	JOR. INT. INSURANCE CO	9	0.00	1	5000	5000	1.00	1.00	-		
.530	.300	CENTRAL GEN. STORAGE	9	0.00	1	3250	1160	.34	.34	-		
.610	.340	JOR. TRADE FAC.	10.1	0.00	22	51600	19588	.38	.38	-		
.800	.660	UNION INV. SOF.	9	0.00	4	7048	1479	.71	.71	-		
.570	.360	ARAB FIN. INVEST.	9	0.00	31	94200	81023	.81	.81	-		
N 1,000	.720	AL-SHARQ INV. CO.	9	0.00	2	20000	18400	.92	.92	.03+		
.310	.310	JOR. INDUS. MATCH-JEHCO	9	0.00	1	250	40	.16	.16	-		
.650	.440	ARAB FOOD. IND.	9	0.00	1	4000	1160	.46	.46	-		
.530	.280	ARAB INTL. INV. TRD.	33.4	0.00	6	4000	460	.46	.46	-		
.750	.380	NATL. MULT. ENG. NAMICO	9	0.00	17	51250	23810	.48	.46	.02-		
.950	.720	KATEKS DYES & MOULDS	9	0.00	11	10569	7393	.70	.68	.02-		
.730	.550	KAZI PHARM.	9	0.00	1	100	70	.28	.28	.01-		
.470	.240	INDUS. ENG.	9	0.00	1	250	69	.73	.69	.04-		
.950	.730	ADVANCED PHARM. IND.	9	0.00	1	100	69	.73	.69	.04-		
N 1,310	1,000	KEBAL PRINT CO. 75%	9	0.00	13	4133	3921	1.25	1.20	.05-		
N 1,000	.950	KEBAL PRINT CO. 75%	9	0.00	1	100	65	.95	.90	.05-		
GRAND TOTAL					114	254850	133726					
1: New 12 months high 2: New 12 months low 3: Stock dividend during the past 12 months 4: Listed during the past 12 months 5: P/E ratio is 100 or more 6: Negative P/E 7: Earning is zero or N/A for the most recent year												

THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

ACROSS

- Caused resentment
- Pesty biting critter
- B.C. era
- Athens man
- Like some glasses
- Critters
- Covered with a thin layer
- Pl. of speech
- Part of OED
- Sun Devils sch.
- Moving ice
- Costa
- "Cactus"
- "Flower" star
- Diviner
- Actor Erik
- Sault Marie
- O-U connection
- Easter item
- Container with a lip
- 4-wheel drive transport abbr.
- Cumey clod
- Daughter of King Wines
- Manufactured facts
- Follows suspiciously
- '54 U.S. Open golf champion
- Samuel's teacher
- Fudd and Gantry
- Crying more
- Intervines
- Do-over
- Southern st.
- Govt. agcy.
- Rapping Doctor
- Othello's nemesis
- Foyer of the "Dance" painter
- Moan of "Happy Days"
- General persistently
- reference book
- Italian fresco painter

Daily Business Deal

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Anani refutes claims of recession or economic deterioration in Kingdom

**** JORDAN DOES NOT suffer from recession or economic deterioration.** Deputy Prime Minister for Development Affairs and Minister for State for Prime Ministry Affairs Jawad Anani said in a lecture last week. "Creating a climate of confusion about the economic situation in Jordan is unjustified because the standard for the present situation should not be the era of Arab Gulf support which lasted for 10 years and was an exceptional period that should not be a base for comparison."

Dr. Anani said the formation and characteristics of the middle class in Jordan has started to change as the concept of the middle class no longer means the employee but the plumbers, the masons and those who work in agriculture among others. "This new class does not acknowledge that wealth means employment." He called for raising the productivity of the Jordanian labourer and for increasing the number of Jordanian labour in the local community as the number of workers from the community is only 60 per cent.

Noting that there are 400,000 foreign workers in the Kingdom, Dr. Anani said that the real number has risen much higher and that each of these workers transfers no less than \$100 outside the country each month. He indicated that any increase in

employment to government institutions will be at the expense of fixing wages or raising taxes and allowing prices to rise. "There is nothing for free," he stressed.

The deputy prime minister said the government will not be able to meet all the demands of deputies requested during the debate on the 1998 budget because the demands have reached more than JD1 billion. Dr. Anani covered other topics which are summarised as follows:

1) Foreign reserves have reached \$1,700 million at the Central Bank whereas the foreign currencies held by the private sector were estimated at \$3,500 million.

2) The government is monitoring the movements in world currency markets on a daily basis in order to take immediate measures upon any emergency.

3) Remittances from expatriates, mostly in Arab countries, amount to \$1.5 billion annually.

4) Industrial investments by 55 Jordanian establishments in Egypt are estimated at 1,600 million Egyptian pounds.

Dr. Anani concluded by noting that from his experience in the government over a period of 20 years, he can say that most corruption charges were for personal and premeditated aims that should be swiftly ruled upon by courts to put an end to street rumours (Al Aswaj).

Jordan asks Tokyo to finance King Hussein Bridge renovation

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordan has requested Japan to renew a \$10 million loan proposal to finance the renovation and expansion works of King Hussein Bridge, which links the Kingdom with the Palestinian self-rule areas, a cabinet official said Saturday.

Deputy Prime Minister for Development Affairs Jawad Anani said the loan will be used to expand the wooden bridge, which was built following the 1967 Arab-Israeli war.

Dr. Anani said the project's designs, which were made by Jordanian engineers, are available but awaiting the finance from the Japanese government.

He told the Jordan Times that the designs stipulate building four lanes, instead of the existing one lane bridge, to facilitate the movement of passengers and trucks and building rest houses for passengers.

Dr. Anani said the project was discussed during the two-day visit of Palestinian President Yasser Arafat to Jordan last week.

The deputy prime minister said the construction will be carried out by the Jordanian side, where Jordan's Armed Forces are expected to participate in the renovation works.

Dr. Anani said the Japanese government's reply to the Jordanian request was expected soon.

The official said that prior to putting the designs it was not clear to decide "with whom we should negotiate this matter. With the Palestinian side or the Israelis."

"We could not negotiate with the Israelis because this violates the peace treaty between Jordan and Israel," Dr. Anani said.

Finally, it was decided that Jordan would carry out the construction works by only notifying the Palestinians and Israeli sides of the Jordanian intention to expand the bridge.

The Israeli-Palestinian peace treaty stipulates that in the final status negotiations, the security of crossing points between the Palestinian territories, Jordan and Egypt should be under Palestinian control.

But despite the presence of Palestinian officers at the western side of the bridge, Israel is still maintaining the security at the

bridge and causing delay in the movement of trucks between Jordan and the self-rule areas.

The Jordanian and Palestinian sides repeatedly accused Israel of blocking the movement

of trucks between the Palestinian territories and Jordan.

Israel claimed the delay was due to security arrangements which restricts the number of trucks that travel between

the two sides to less than 40 a day.

Jordanian and Palestinian trade officials blamed Israeli security arrangements at the bridge for impeding the flow of goods between the two

countries.

Jordanian officials said Israel wants to maintain its monopoly over the Palestinian market, to which it exports \$2 billion of goods annually.

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Notice of Invitation

Notice of invitation to tender

EC No. IB/0052
Jordan No. 142/97 Central

issued by: Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

for a project identified for financing by the European Community (EC)

1. Project identification and financing:

- Title: Water Sector Intervention
- Number: SEM/04/628-009
- Source of financing: EC Budget
- Status of the financing: Approved

NB: the award of contracts is subject to financing being approved and made available.

2. Contract identification:

- Type of contract: Works for Tafilah and Karak.
- Subject: Tafilah water supply system and Karak water supply and effluent reuse.
- Number of lots: 2
- Lot No. 1: (Package 1) Construction of approximately 45km of ductile iron pipeline varying in diameter from 100mm to 400mm, and a water supply pumping station and a reservoir of 1000 m³ capacity in Karak Governorate.
- Lot No. 2: (Package 4) Construction of approximately 45km of ductile iron pipeline varying in diameter from DN 200mm to DN 500mm, and 3 water supply pumping stations each has a reservoir of 500m³ capacity and two reservoirs of 500m³ and 5000m³ capacity in Tafilah Governorate.

Groups of lots: Contractors can bid to any of the two lots or to both lots, pre-conditions to win both lots are not allowed.

3. Eligibility, origin and evaluation criteria:

- Eligibility and origin
- 1) Qualified EC contractors according to the questionnaire attached with tender documents.
- 2) Jordanian Contractors classified by the Ministry of Public Works and Housing of Jordan, as First Grade in Water Sewerage.

Evaluation: See tender documents (Qualifications Questionnaire).

4. Location and deadline:

- Project location: Karak and Tafilah (Jordan)
- Place of delivery, installation or performance: as 4a
- Delivery or performance period: 18 months for Lot No. 1 and 24 months for lot No. 2
- Tender validity period: 90 days from the date of receipt of bids

5. Project authorities:

- Contracting authority: Ministry of Water and Irrigation, Water Authority
- Supervisor: Secretary General of the Water Authority, Water Authority of Jordan, Ministry of Water and Irrigation, P.O. Box: 2412 Amman, Jordan, Tel.: (00962 6) 680100, Fax: (00962 6) 678158

6. Tender Documents:

- Type of tender: Open invitation to tender
- Terms on which tender documents may be obtained: against payment of:
 - Lot No. 1 (Karak): amount of JD250
 - Lot No. 2 (Tafilah): amount of JD500
- From: Government Tenders Directorate, Ministry of Public Works and Housing P.O. Box: 1220, Amman, Jordan Tel.: (00962 6) 858312-314 Fax: (00962 6) 857583
- Inspection of tender documents in the country of the contracting authority: Water Authority of Jordan, Ministry of Water and Irrigation, P.O. Box: 2412 Amman, Jordan Tel.: (00962 6) 680100 Fax: (00962 6) 678158
- Inspection of the tender documents in the Member States: Offices of the Commission of the European Communities (see address below)

7. Language, receipt and opening of tenders:

- Language: English
- Date and time for receipt of tenders: On 16th March, 1998 at 12:00 hours Jordan Local Time
- Address for receipt: Government Tenders Directorate, Ministry of Public Works and Housing, P.O. Box 1220 Amman, Jordan Tel.: (00962 6) 858312-314 Fax: (00962 6) 857583
- Date and time for opening of tenders: On 16th March, 1998 at 13:30 hours Jordan Local Time.
- Address for opening: Government Tenders Directorate, Ministry of Public Works and Housing, P.O. Box 1220, Amman, Jordan Tel.: (00962 6) 858312-314 Fax: (00962 6) 857583

8. Deposits and guarantees:

- Tender guarantee: For Lot No. 1: 40,000 ECUs and for Lot No. 2: 80,000 ECUs

9. Site visit and pre-bid conference: Yes

- Site Visit
- Date and time: at 08:00 hours on 15th Feb. 1998 for Lot No. 1 and at 08:00 hours 16th Feb. 1998 for Lot No. 2
- Meeting point: Water Authority of Jordan Offices
- Pre-bid conference on 17th Feb. 1998 at 09:00 hours Jordan Local Time at Water Authority Offices

10. Further information:

- References: This notice is published pursuant to Council Regulation (EEC) No. 443/92 of 25 February 1992 (OJ L-52, 27. 2. 92) Address of the Commission of European Communities (GD IB) and its Offices in the Member States:
- A 1040 Wien, Hoyosgasse 5 - (tel.: 43-1-503379 - 5053491) - (fax: 43-1-50533797)
- B 1140 Bruxelles, DG IB/E/2, rue de la Science 14, bureau 6/32 - (tel: 32-2-2966906 - 2990732) (fax: 32-2-2961101)
- D 53113 Bonn Zitelmannstrasse 22 - (tel: 49-228-530090) (fax: 49-228-5300950)
- DK 1787 København V, Dansk Industri, Projekt - og Licitationskontoret af EMI, (tel: 45-33-77377) (fax: 45-33-773300)
- E 28046 Madrid, Po Castellana, 46 - (tel: 34-1-4315711) (fax: 34-1-5760387)
- EL 10674 Athens, Vassilissis Sofias, 2 - (tel: 30-1-7243982) (fax: 34-1-5760387)
- F 75007 Paris, 288 Boulevard St. Germain - (tel: 33-1-40633838) (fax: 33-1-45569417)
- FIN 00131 Helsinki, Pohjoisesplanadi 31, P.O. Box 234 - (tel: 358-0-656420) (fax: 358-0-656728)
- I 00187 Roma, Via Poli, 29 - (tel: 39-6-699991) (fax: 6791658)
- IR 2 Dawson Street, 18 - (tel: 353-1-6625113) (fax: 353-1-66124118)
- L 1920 Luxembourg, Ch. De Commerce, 7, Rue A. De Gasperi, Bp 1503 - (tel: 352-43011) (fax: 352-4301433)
- NL 2004 AA Den Haag, C.V.U., afdeling PPA Bezuiderhoutseweg 181 (tel: 31-70-379701) (fax: 31-70-3797878)
- PT 1200 Lisbona, Centro Europeu Jean Monnet, Largo Jean Monnet, 1, 10. (tel: 351-1-541144) (fax: 351-1-3509801)
- S 11147 Stockholm, Hamngatan 6 - (tel: 46-8-6111172) (fax: 46-8-6114435)
- UK London SW1 P3 AT, 8 Storey's Gate - (tel: 44-171-9731992) (fax: 44-171-9731900)

Director General,
Eng. Naser Madadha

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The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar	1.0000	0.6112	0.4835	0.3370	109.36	0.7086	1936.26	2.0361	6.5596
DE Mark	0.6112	1.0000	0.3756	0.2537	163.76	0.4835	1236.00	1.3363	4.3759
GB Sterling	0.4835	0.3756	1.0000	0.6553	163.76	0.4835	1236.00	1.3363	4.3759
CH Franc	0.3370	0.2537	0.6553	1.0000	136.75	0.5081	1203.30	1.3779	4.0967
JP Yen	0.0074	0.0061	0.0061	0.0061	1.0000	0.0074	109.36	0.0074	0.0074
CA Dollar	0.7086	0.4835	0.4835	0.3370	109.36	1.0000	136.75	1.0000	1.0000
IT Lira	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000	0.0000	0.0000
NL Guilder	0.0020	0.0015	0.0015	0.0015	0.0015	0.0020	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000
FR Franc	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000

Middle Eastern Currencies									
Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	BAH	QAT	KUW	AED	LBP	EGP
US Dollar	1.0000	0.7090	3.7500	0.3770	3.6400	0.3089	3.6728	1627.00	3.4060
Jordan Dinar	1.4104	1.0000	5.2888	0.5317	5.1340	0.4315	4.1803	2153.74	4.8028
Saudi Riyal	0.2666	0.1890	1.0000	0.1005	0.97	0.0816	0.98	407.15	0.9078
Bahrain Dinar	2.65	1.8806	9.9483	1.0000	9.76	0.8114	8.74	4050.40	8.0318
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.1948	1.0304	1.0304	1.0000	0.0840	1.01	419.61	0.9354
Kuwait Dinar	3.2690	2.3178	12.2605	1.2324	11.90	1.201	4901.83	0.9354	0.9354
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.1930	1.0212	1.0212	0.9911	0.0833	1.01	416.76	0.9271
Lebanese L1000	0.65	0.4643	2.4881	0.2489	2.3838	0.2003	2.4082	1.0000	2.2299
Egyptian	0.2527	0.2062	1.1016	0.1107	1.0980	0.0986	1.0786	448.48	1.0000

Energy									
Oil	Last	Previous							
Brent	14.97	14.84							
W. Texas	16.45	16.32							
Bonny	14.97	14.84							
Dubai	13.37	13.00							
UL Gas	160.00	157.00							

Mid-East Currencies									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY				
SA Riyal	0.2666	0.4889	0.16296	0.39968	34.5018				
AE Dirham	0.2723	0.4992	0.16841	0.40813	35.2324				
KW Dinar	3.2690	8.9852	1.998	4.89566	423.012				
BH Dinar	0.3770	4.86381	1.62127	3.97614	343.289				
CY Pound	1.8591	3.4077	1.1389	2.7859	240.475				

Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)									
Period	-1-	-3-	-6-	-9-	-12-				
USD	5.48	6.50	6.51	6.53	6.56				
GBP	7.34	7.47	7.50	7.50	7.50				
JPY	0.39	0.36	0.36	0.38	0.39				
DEM	3.70	3.48	3.58	3.67	3.73				
FRF	3.73	4.01	3.86	3.84	3.71				

Metal Prices									
Metal	Bid	Offer							
Gold (oz's)	290.5	291							
Silver (oz's)	6.83	6.86							
Platinum (oz's)	375	377							
AL (3 Months)	1600	1605							
CU (3 Months)	1713	1717							
Zinc (3 Months)	1151	1154							

JORDAN TIMES
TEL: 684311-699634

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Sanchez Vicario downs Venus for Sydney title

SYDNEY (AFP) — A revitalised Arantxa Sanchez Vicario denied Venus Williams her first tour title here Saturday, downing the American teenager in straight sets in the Sydney International final.

"I think I'm in my best period as an athlete. I'm feeling better than ever now and I proved it today playing well," said the Spanish World No. 3.

"I feel stronger now and better physically than ever ... I know I can still prove a couple things," she said, after dropping just one set this week and pulling off the final victory 6-1 6-3.

Twice a runner-up here, Sanchez Vicario also bulldozed the younger Williams sister, 16-year-old Serena, this week on the way to her 25th tour title.

"Today I was in business, knowing I had to be the one who was aggressive from the beginning," said Sanchez Vicario, citing experience and maturity as the key to her recent winning streak.

The irrepressible Williams duo boasted this week that they would dominate tennis over the coming decade, but Sanchez Vicario's performance has shown they have some work to do before reaching their goal of sitting atop the rankings.

Venus worked hard against her more experienced competitor Saturday, but her every error was exploited.

"I think she is one of the players who is very consistent and waits on you to make a mistake. And I'm more of a high-risk player," Williams said.

"I think it's nice that she



Spain's Arantxa Sanchez Vicario celebrates after winning her final clash against Venus Williams of the U.S. at the Sydney International tournament at White City, Sydney. Sanchez Vicario won the title over Williams 6-1 6-3 (Reuters photo)

won a title, even if it is at my expense."

Sanchez Vicario said the Williams sisters had similar big-hitting styles, but they would need more weapons if they were to break into the top ten.

"Obviously I don't have the power that other players

have but that is not all you need to win," she said.

"I'm not just a defensive player like some people say ... I have other qualities and that's how I got to be No. 1."

After her 6-2 6-1 victory over Serena Friday, Sanchez Vicario welcomed the crop

of talented young girls to the tennis scene, but warned they would meet resistance from the established players.

"Even though I'm ten years older than them I'm still there, and experience counts a lot," she said.

After a 20-month title drought, the Spaniard admitted a number of upset wins in 1997 had sapped her confidence.

"Last year was the year that probably was not the best ... I didn't win a tournament. Obviously I've been very long on the tour and I didn't have the rest that I should."

In the men's final here, Slovakia's Karol Kucera upset British tennis heart-throb Tim Henman, the defending champion, despite waking up Saturday morning in severe pain.

"I woke up really badly. I couldn't turn my head around and I couldn't move out (of bed)," Kucera said. But the Slovakian, ranked No. 25 in the world before Saturday's win, was able to start the final after treatment from two ATP tour trainers and won 7-5 6-4 after coming back from a 0-4 deficit in the first set.

Henman, who was the top seed in the Australian Open warm-up, said the loss would have no effect on him psychologically entering the Grand Slam in Melbourne next week.

"I think my preparation has been ideal. I've had a lot of matches this week. I'm feeling very confident," he said. "The way I look at it I'm capable of beating anyone on my day. ... If I can continue the way I'm playing I'll be hard to beat."

Graf set for February return in Tokyo

BRUEHL, Germany (AFP)

— Former World No. 1 tennis player Steffi Graf of Germany is set to return to competition in Tokyo in February following seven months out injured, according to her manager Hans Engert on Friday.

"She is on course to come back in February and hopes to reach the heights again in world tennis," 28-year-old Engert said.

Graf's knee, which had screws taken out of it in November, is no longer painful, Engert added. Graf has not played competitively since losing last June in the quarter-finals of the French Open to South Africa's Amanda Coetzer.

Kucera upsets Henman in final

SYDNEY (AFP) — Slovakian Karol Kucera came from behind to upset No. 1 seed Tim Henman 7-5 6-4 in the final of the Sydney International Saturday.

Kucera appeared unsettled early on after Henman broke the Slovakian's first service games to take a 4-0 lead.

But Kucera, ranked No. 25 in the world, won four straight games to tie the set at 4-4 and then broke in the 11th game to take a 6-5 lead.

The unseeded Kucera then held the 11th game, finishing on an ace to take the set 7-5. Henman, whose service began to falter late in the first set, threw his racket as he was returning to his seat, after he was broken by Kucera to open the second set.

Kucera's comeback in the first set appeared to demoralise Henman, who raised his hands in frustration several times during the second set.

Henman, ranked No. 17 in the world, had reached the final of the Australian Open warm-up after beating World No. 2, Australian Pat Rafter



Slovakia's Karol Kucera holds the trophy over his head after his win over Britain's Tim Henman in the men's final at the Sydney International tournament at White City, Sydney. Kucera won the title over defending champion Henman 7-5, 6-4 (Reuters photo)

7-6 (7-5) 7-5. Kucera beat 4-6 7-6 (8-6) 6-0 to reach Australian Michael Tebbutt the final.

Nothing off-limits at Olympic village

NAGANO (AFP) — Welcome to the Nagano Olympic Village, a place of modest affluence complete with a mountain of condoms and tiny bathtubs.

"In view of AIDS, the condom has been a regular item at international multi-sports festivals for years," said Olympic Village director Kanichi Ogushi, recalling its popularity as a souvenir at the 1994 Asian Games in Hiroshima.

By courtesy of a major Japanese rubber-product maker, 36,000 condoms will be up for grabs at the main medical clinic of the village, home to some 3,000 competitors and officials during the 16-day Winter Games opening on February 7.

But Ogushi said there would be no enforcement of sexual discipline at all. "It is a personal matter over which we have no control."

The newly-built apartment complex over a suburban plot of 19 hectares also features the only disco in town, which closes at midnight, and a stadium-like cafeteria with 300 dishes on offer around the clock.

The 1,030 units in the complex, mostly housed in five- or six-storey

towers, are designed to be leased or sold to local citizens and civil servants later.

Of them, 70 per cent are built on a lower middle-class format — three bedrooms, a dining kitchen and a bath room. Some of upper-scale units have sun-bathing chambers.

All rooms are carpeted with tatami straw mats.

"You don't have to take off your shoes like we do," Ogushi said.

Rooms are separated by boards which can be replaced by Japanese-style paper-and-wood sliding doors. The cash-strapped organisers have rented wooden bedframes which have been used at the 1994 Asian Games in Hiroshima and the Student Games in Fukuoka in 1995.

But there is a limit to the makeshift design. In the bathrooms, the tubs look more like sawn-off coffins in which tall athletes will need to crouch.

"It is normal by Japanese standards," Ogushi said. "We could not make it bigger for foreigners as we had to consider its use after the Games."

Many competitors may find peace

of mind at the religious centre where they can pray at three chapels, which have no altars so that they can be adjusted to any faith.

The 1,000-seat cafeteria, the size of two basketball courts, hopes to satisfy every palate with foods ranging from "halal" meat for Muslims to such local delights as buckwheat noodles and apples.

"Dream Team" players from the North American Hockey League have agreed in principle to stay at the village while biathletes and medal hopefuls from skiing powerhouses opt to lodge close to their venues, as far as 40 kilometers away.

For Anaheim Mighty Ducks forward Teemu Selanne, who will play for his home country Finland, it will be a change from the 1992 Albertville Olympics where hockey players were accommodated separately.

"It was really boring," he told reporters when he visited Tokyo last year. "This time, it should be no problem because there will be other athletes from other sports."

Philippoussis beats Agassi in Kooyong final

MELBOURNE (AFP) — Australia's Mark "Scud" Philippoussis deliberately toned down his big serve Saturday but still defeated former World No. 1 Andre Agassi in the Kooyong Classic final.

Philippoussis, 21, is making a deliberate attempt to rely less on power play, but still fired down 21 aces to wrap up the title 6-3, 7-6 (7/3) in 67 minutes and expose gaps in Agassi's comeback campaign.

And the 27-year-old American rarely looked in contention. Each time he stole a point off the Australian, Philippoussis would reply with a 200 kilometre-an-hour ace.

Agassi lost his serve in the fifth game by hitting out a simple volley over the net when his opponent was nowhere in sight.

There were breaks in successive games in the second set, but Agassi's concentration gave out in the tie break.

"Today I was not serving hard but my accuracy was good in the corners. I got a lot more free points that way," said Philippoussis, who has been overtaken as Australia's number one by Pat Rafter.

Agassi, who reached the semi-final of the Australian Hardcourt Championships and won three games in the Kooyong invitation event, still insisted he was fully prepared for the Australian Open, which he won in 1995.

"I'm ready to go," said Agassi, who last year slumped outside the world top 100 last year. He has



Australian Mark Philippoussis prepares to serve against Andre Agassi of U.S. during the Colonial Classic Tournament in Melbourne January 17. Philippoussis won the Australian Open warm-up event 6-3 7-6 (7-3) (Reuters photo)

lost 10 kilos as part of a fitness campaign and will play an as yet unknown qualifier in the first round of the Open which starts Monday.

Philippoussis, who plays Alex Calatrava of Spain, said he was happy not to

have to meet Agassi in the opening stages.

"Even though he has not been seeded, he is a very dangerous player who I wouldn't want to play in the first rounds."

The classic, an invitation

event which also featured world number one Pete Sampras, is the traditional warmup to the Australian Open. Sampras finished joint bottom of the six players after losing twice during the week.

1998 WINTER GAMES PREVIEW

Quakes: top security worry at Nagano Olympics

NAGANO (AFP) — Earthquakes are first on the checklist of security chiefs at the Nagano Winter Olympics.

That may come as a surprise in view of the bombing at the Atlanta Summer Games in 1996 or the recent massacre at the Egyptian ruins of Luxor.

"Earthquakes top our contingency plans," said Asata Hara, security director at the organising committee. "We must be able to evacuate facilities as quickly and safely as possible," he said.

The myth of Japan being a safe country no longer holds for the International Olympic Committee (IOC) — especially since the 1995 earthquake which killed 6,300 people in the port of Kobe and a nerve-gas attack on the Tokyo subway by the doomsday cult Aum Supreme Truth which choked a dozen to death.

"They have asked time and again over the last three years if the Nagano Games would be free from Aum and quakes," Hara said.

The plain-talking security chief, on loan from the prefectural police, has assured the Olympic chiefs that leaders of the cult are all in jail awaiting trial.

But he admitted that there was no way of predicting any earthquake as the Winter Olympics come to the Pacific volcanic "ring of fire" for the fourth time — after Squaw Valley (California) in 1960, Sapporo (Japan) in 1972 and Calgary (Alberta) in 1988.

For years, the Pacific board south of Nagano has been on the alert for a "Big One" that may match the 1923 "Great Kanto" earthquake in which 140,000 perished.

Hara said there had been not been any terrorist threat against any target in Nagano.

"But we will take no chances," he said, citing the "Black September" murder of 11 Israelis at the 1972 Munich Summer Olympics athletes village as well as the bombing at the Centennial Olympic Park during the Atlanta Games.

The Atlanta nightmare left two persons dead and its culprit remains at large.

The local police, who refuse to discuss their security arrangements, conducted an anti-hijacking drill at nearby Matsumoto airport in November.

The Nagano Olympic Organising Committee (NAOC) will mobilise 1,000 security guards and 2,000 vol-

unteers and local police will be beefed up by 6,000 officers from other regions.

The aim is to ensure no-one brings any lethal weapon through metal detectors at Olympic venues — as well as a downtown plaza where medal-awarding ceremonies will be held before crowds who have access there free of charge.

But security officials are also counting on a bit of Japanese high technology to enforce "softer" security measures — such as the world's first contraption to check the pattern of a person's iris for access control. Each person's iris is said to be unique in the same way that fingerprints are.

The system, developed by a Tokyo telecommunications equipment maker, takes only two seconds to complete the check and prevents unauthorised use which can occur with magnetic cards for identification.

It will be used at the biathlon venue to control access to the rifle storage room in the Olympic village.

And a fingerkey system, much quicker than before, will be used to stop intruders reaching the doping control rooms.

CINEMA	TEL: 64144	CINEMA	TEL: 634144	CINEMA	TEL: 77725	CINEMA	TEL: 677420	CINEMA	TEL: 099 33430	CINEMA	TEL: 099 33430	CINEMA	TEL: 099 33430	Risham Yanes Theatre	TEL: 625155
PHILADELPHIA "1"		PHILADELPHIA "2"		PLAZA		CONCORD		GALLERIA 2		GALLERIA 1					
George Clooney & Nicole Kidman ... in		Steven Spielberg's ...		SCREAM		CONCORD - 12		ABDOUN		ABDOUN					
THE PEACEMAKER		TWISTER		AL MASEER (Arabic)		CONSPIRACY THEORY		BEVERLY HILLS NINJA		FOOLS RUSH IN				THE GOVERNMENT IN THE SERVICE OF PEOPLE	
Shows: 12:15, 2:15, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30		Shows: 12:15, 2:15, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30		Nour Al Sharif Shows: 8:30, 10:45		Shows: 12:00, 2:00, 6:00, 8:30, 10:45		Shows: 2:00, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30		Shows: 2:00, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30				Starring Hisham Yanes and Amal Dabbas	
				HERCULES		MR. BEAN									
				Shows: 2:00 p.m.		Shows: 6:30, 8:30, 10:30									

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At least 26 killed south of Algiers

ALGIERS (AFP) — Algerian press reports Saturday uncovered at least another 26 brutal slayings by suspected Islamists, 18 of them at a fake road block manned by armed men in military uniform.

The killings all took place Thursday in areas south of the capital, Algiers.

At the same time, the bodies of three girls, kidnapped last Sunday in the attack on the village of Sidi Hammud, have been found with their throats cut, the daily El Khabar reported. That attack left at least 100 people dead.

According to Liberte, 18 people had their throats cut and another six were kid-

napped at a fake roadblock on the road between Sour El Ghoulane and Bordj Khiss, around 100 km south of the capital. Five of the attackers were wearing military fatigues, the paper said.

Security forces carried out a sweep of the area and found one of the victims still alive, but she later died of her wounds in hospital.

At Ouzera, near Medea, 80 km south of the capital, six members of a family, including two children, were blown to pieces by a bomb.

The mosque at Ouzera had been hit by two home-made mortars a few days ago, but nobody was hurt.

Two people were killed

and two more injured Thursday after their vehicle was strafed by a Kalashnikov-wielding gang manning an unofficial road-block between Medea and Berrouagha, the Le Matin newspaper said.

The regions around Medea and Sour El Ghoulane have both witnessed an upsurge in violence recently, with 26 people being massacred last week in an attack on one village.

According to press reports, more than 1,500 Algerian civilians have been killed in spiralling violence since Dec. 30 — the start of the Holy Month of Ramadan.

Netanyahu's hard-line narrows Clinton's peace process options

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's hard line puts President Bill Clinton in a tough spot days before Mr. Clinton is set to meet with him and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat.

Mr. Clinton was set to hold separate talks with Mr. Netanyahu on Tuesday and Mr. Arafat on Thursday in the latest bid to put the faltering peace talks back on track after 10 months of stalemate.

On Wednesday Mr. Netanyahu's conservative government dimmed hopes that the talks would lead to any breakthrough by saying Israeli would keep control of much of the West Bank no matter what comes of the negotiations.

It also qualified its promise to redeploy the Israeli army in the West Bank — a step Israel must carry out under the Oslo accords for Palestinian autonomy — by releasing a list of some 40 conditions.

These were immediately rejected by the Palestinians and generated grumbles from Washington.

"We were taken by surprise, and it is not helpful to our ability to conduct diplomacy on this important subject in advance of the meetings of the president," said a State Department official speaking on condition of

anonymity.

That Israel would maintain control of not only Jewish settlements but also of the West Bank's key roads and water resources were not part of the discussions when U.S. envoy Dennis Ross was in Israel last week, the official said.

Issued Wednesday, the list of areas that Israel wants to control amounts to some 60 per cent of the West Bank, according to Israeli public radio. It would leave Palestinians with pockets of sovereign territory impossible to cobble into a viable state.

Government officials rejected the view that its decision meant it is not serious about implementing the Oslo accords.

It noted that Wednesday's cabinet decision was kept deliberately vague to avoid a conflict with Mr. Clinton and a clash between moderates and hardliners in government.

"This decision gave Netanyahu the maximum flexibility because it designated the vital interests of Israel but did not define them with maps or figures," David Bar-Ilan, Mr. Netanyahu's senior adviser, said.

On Tuesday, looking back at his first year as the U.S. secretary of state, Madeleine Albright blandly said that the fate of the

peace process in the region rested in the hands of the Israelis and Palestinians.

"No matter what we in the administration or Congress do, it is up to the two leaders to make the tough decisions and to move the process forward," she said.

Nonetheless, the New York Times in an editorial urged Mr. Clinton to flex some political muscle even though there is little chance of movement next week.

"Washington must soon decide whether to try to referee the reciprocity debate or to advance its own ideas for peace, leaping beyond the current impasse."

The Times said Mr. Clinton "should press for an Israeli withdrawal from an additional 10 per cent or more of West Bank territory that begins quickly and is not hedged with preconditions."

Mr. Arafat, for his part, must be told that "he cannot justify his own inexcusable lack of consistency on security issues."

For his part, New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman says he fears that the president will choose another option, one in which he "fumes in private, says nothing in public and proceeds with a peace process he knows will go nowhere."

Arafat cancels visit to U.S. Holocaust museum — report

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Palestinian President Yasser Arafat has cancelled plans to visit the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum during his upcoming visit to Washington after museum officials refused to provide security, the Washington Post reported Saturday.

U.S. President Bill Clinton will meet with Mr. Arafat at the White House on Thursday, in hopes of getting the Mideast peace process going after 10 months of stagnation.

Mr. Clinton will meet with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on

Tuesday. Mr. Arafat's visit to the exhibition on Nazi genocide — one of the largest and most detailed in the world — had been suggested by U.S. deputy special Mideast envoy Aaron Miller as a gesture of reconciliation, according to the Post.

However, some members of the Jewish community who got wind of the visit told museum officials that Mr. Arafat was "Hitler incarnate," and must not be welcome in the museum, the Post reported.

The museum, which receives federal funds, can-

not turn anyone away, but officials have refused to offer security or extend protocol courtesies given to other world leaders.

Mr. Arafat could visit the museum, but he would have to stand in line like any other tourist, museum officials said.

Mr. Miller and U.S. envoy to the Middle East Dennis Ross strongly believed that a visit by Mr. Arafat to the museum could quietly mark a psychological breakthrough in Palestinian-Israeli relations.

White House sceptical of progress in Netanyahu, Arafat meeting

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The White House said Friday that it didn't harbour hopes of major progress in next week's meetings between U.S. President Bill Clinton and Israeli and Palestinian leaders.

Mr. Clinton will meet with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu Tuesday at the White House and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat two days later, in hopes of getting the Mideast peace process going after 10 months of stagnation.

"I think it's realistic to expect that, as often is the case in the Middle East peace process, that this will be a meeting that is candid," and requires "patience," said White House spokesman Michael McCurry.

Noting that Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and the U.S. envoy to the Middle East, Dennis Ross, met with Mr. Netanyahu and Mr. Arafat recently to prepare for the talks, Mr. McCurry added: "Our expectations, frankly, are not great at this point."

"We are realistic about where we are at this moment and just know that we have to continue to try to press forward and continue to get the parties to focus on the choices they must make," said Mr. McCurry.

The Israeli cabinet Wednesday adopted a long list of conditions the Palestinians must meet ahead of any troop withdrawal. Israel has decided in any case that it will maintain control of a large swathe of the West Bank.



BLESSING A DUCK: Father Villar of the Saint Anton church blesses a duck in Madrid on Saturday. Traditionally a part of the Saint Anton festival the priest of the district of Saint Anton (Madrid) blesses thousands of dogs, cats, birds, tortoises and sometimes pigs, tigers or other more unusual domestic animals (AFP photo)

Turkey ponders future of Islamist movement after ban of Welfare

ANKARA (AP) — Soon after a Turkish court shut down the largest Islamist party for violating the nation's secular constitution, the Welfare Party's leadership vowed to retain control of — and strengthen — their movement.

"Our cause will get stronger, and supporters will grow," Necmettin Erbakan, leader of the Islamist Welfare Party, said Friday.

Welfare supporters have already established a new party, called Virtue, as a substitute for the party banned on Friday under a provision that prohibits parties based on ethnicity, religion or communist ideology.

Hours before the court announced its decision, Mr. Erbakan held a round of meeting with leaders of two centre-right parties, reportedly lobbying for revision of the constitution to lift its ban.

"It is the slaughter of the law 40 times over, but we respect the decision," Mr. Erbakan said.

Some legal experts also argued that Mr. Erbakan could challenge the ban by running on an independent ticket in the next elections.

Mr. Erbakan, among six deputies whose political activities were limited for the next five years by the court verdict, appeared poised to fight on to retain his hold on the growing Islamist movement.

"Erbakan won't give up the control of the party," said Ali Bayramoglu, a sociologist. "To say Erbakan is finished, the movement is dead, is wrong."

Welfare came out of the last elections in 1995 as leader with 21 per cent of the votes. The victory carried the party to power in a coalition with a pro-Western, centre-right party.

However, its rule lasted only one year, as the secular establishment, led by the powerful generals, forced it out of power because of its attempts to emphasise Islam's role in public and civil life.

"The verdict is the final phase of the secular cam-

paign against Welfare," said Sencer Ayata, a sociologist. "They have to find a way to mend fences with the state."

Some analysts predicted that a new Islamist party would opt to be more moderate than radical, taking European Christian democratic parties as a model.

Such a bid requires Islamic leaders to moderate their rhetoric as well.

The court based its ruling on Mr. Erbakan's speeches. He once likened Welfare to an "Islamic Jihad Army" and contended it would one day rule in Turkey regardless of the transition is "sweet or bloody."

"We will adopt a milder tone. We have made mistakes in the past. But we didn't deserve to be closed," said Bulent Arinc, 49, a younger-generation Welfare deputy also tipped to lead the cause.

The 71-year-old Erbakan is expected to choose a trustworthy caretaker to lead a new party. Two former parties led by Mr. Erbakan were shut down before. Mr. Erbakan each

time managed to make strong comebacks.

However, some analysts say, given his late age, it would be difficult for Mr. Erbakan to control the movement and there would be attempts by the party's younger generation to take hold of the reins.

The top candidate among the younger generation is Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the mayor of Istanbul.

"The hotshot wrestlers will come to the arena, and for the first time within Welfare, there will be a political struggle," said Rusen Cakir, an expert on the Islamic movement.

Turkey faces tough times in the international field for closing a political party.

Washington said the decision damaged Turkish democracy and multiparty system. And even before the ruling, the European Union last month refused to consider the Muslim Nation for full membership, citing shortcomings in the Turkish democracy.



De Niro raising the hackles of Parisians with the shooting of new film

PARIS (AFP) — Robert De Niro is in Paris filming John Frankenheimer's latest epic, "The Ronin," in which the Oscar-winner stars as a modern-day wandering samurai warrior. Filming is expected to continue until the end of February, raising the hackles of Parisians living on the banks of the Seine who are being subjected to lengthy night-time shoots with noisy special effects. The plot of "The Ronin" concerns six people brought together for a special operation, financed by an anonymous sponsor with a mysterious suitcase which is coveted by several obscure international groups.

Richard Gere to star at Vienna ball

VIENNA (AFP) — Actor Richard Gere will be among the rich and glamorous at Vienna's Opera Ball next month. The Opera House event, hosted by President Thomas Klestil, is the jewel in the crown of Vienna's traditional ball season, which is now in full swing at the Austrian capital. Gere, who will attend at the invitation of Vienna jeweller Christian Huebner, Austrian radio reported. The event has in the past attracted international stars including Princess Caroline of Monaco, Sophia Loren and Grace Jones.

Judge refuses to dismiss libel suit by super couple Willis and Moore

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — A judge refused to dismiss libel charges against a supermarket tabloid, the Star, brought by super couple Bruce Willis and Demi Moore. The actors claimed that the Star falsely reported in its June 10 edition that their marriage was in peril. The story, headlined "Bruce and Demi: On The Rocks — Now It's Turning Into Hollywood's Nastiest Divorce In Years," said the couple was "secretly headed for Splitville," according to the complaint. The couple said the paper also falsely reported in a July edition that Moore "partied up a storm" with actor Johnny Depp after he split from supermodel Kate Moss.

Bulgarian songwriter accuses Jackson of stealing hit song

SOFIA (AFP) — A Bulgarian songwriter accused U.S. pop giant Michael Jackson of plagiarism, saying a hit by the star was a virtual copy of a tune he wrote in 1981. Atanas Atanasov said Jackson's 1997 hit "Blood On The Dance Floor" took its melody and rhythm from a song he wrote, "New Year," in 1981 — and he is seeking compensation through the courts. "I know they will call me crazy, but I cannot forget my author's rights," he told Thursday's Troud newspaper. Pending a court decision, he has demanded that Jackson's song be banned from Bulgarian airwaves.

Armani does windows for historic Paris neighbour

PARIS (AFP) — Fashion designer Giorgio Armani is offering a chunk of the takings from his new Paris store to help restore windows at the city's historic Saint Germain des Pres Church. To mark the opening of the store in the Saint Germain des Pres district on the Left Bank, he has promised to contribute 15 per cent of the store's turnover from Jan. 22-24. That is on top of a donation of \$160,000 which he has already pledged to restore the windows, his aides say. "This donation shows my desire to integrate Emporio Armani into the life and soul of this mythical district," he said.

Qatar's interior ministry fires 152 Egyptians

DOHA (AP) — Qatar's interior ministry has fired at least 152 Egyptians in the wake of tension between the two countries, an Egyptian diplomat said Saturday.

"There's been a trend to ease out Egyptian workers from Qatar's public sector because of the tense ties," said an Egyptian diplomat who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The diplomat said 20 other Egyptians were dismissed from the Qatari armed forces over the past few days. A spokesman for Qatar's interior ministry refused to comment.

The diplomat said that if relations between the two countries did not improve, he expected the rest of the 5,000 Egyptians working in Qatar's public sector to be fired by summer.

Egyptian-Qatari ties soured in November after Egypt joined several Arab countries in boycotting the Middle East and North Africa economic conference that was held in Doha. President Hosni Mubarak was reported to have reconciled with the Qatari emir, Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, when King Fahd of Saudi Arabia brought them together in Riyadh last month.

Russia completes first module for new space station

MOSCOW (AFP) — Russian and U.S. space officials Saturday unveiled the completed first module of an international space station, to be sent to the Baikonur cosmodrome next week and launched on June 30.

The 20-tonne functional cargo block, known by the Russian acronym FGB, will provide the initial propulsion and power for the space station.

All modules are expected to be in orbit by 2002. The space station project combines contributions from the United States, Russia, Canada, Japan and the European Space Agency (ESA), and the first crew members are due to arrive in mid-1999.

It will be used for a wide range of scientific experiments, and will replace Russia's 11-year-old Mir orbital station, which Russian space officials plan to keep in service until late 1999 despite a spate of accidents and breakdowns last year.

The FGB will begin its five-day journey Thursday from the Khrunichev factory in Moscow, where it was built, to the cosmodrome in Kazakhstan, travelling 1,920 kilometres on a special rail car.

It will be accompanied by a massive Proton rocket, which can put much larger payloads into orbit than the Soyuz rocket.

The FGB was originally due to blast off from Baikonur last November, but delays in construction of the

second Russian element of the station — the service module — put back the launch date.

"We will definitely fulfil our commitments [in the space station project]," Russian Space Agency (RSA) Director Yuri Koptev told a news conference at the Khrunichev factory Saturday.

Construction of the service module has been held up by financial problems bedevilling the Russian space programme.

Mr. Koptev put the overall cost of the service module, due to be launched in December, at \$800 million. He said only \$180 million of last year's budgeted allocation of \$250 million had been received by Russia's space industry, and another \$250 million would be needed to complete the module on schedule this year.

Mr. Koptev said President Boris Yeltsin, who returned to Moscow Saturday after a two-week holiday in the country northwest of the capital, issued instructions Wednesday to improve financing for the Russian contribution.

Khrunichev Project Manager Sergey Shuyevich said the construction delays had enabled the Russian space experts and their partners from the U.S. Boeing Aerospace Company to make improvements to the FGB, which was funded by the U.S.

More than 300 changes were made to upgrade the FGB, including a modification enabling it to be refuelled

directly by Progress cargo vehicles rather than via the service module as originally planned, Mr. Shuyevich said.

The FGB will stay in orbit for 15 years — longer than any of the other modules, he added.

The FGB and service module will be joined later by six laboratory modules — three Russian, one American, one Japanese and one European — plus a U.S. module able to accommodate four crew and docking nodes.

The FGB cost \$232 million to build, "a bargain for such a complex space vehicle," NASA engineer Jack Bacon told AFP, pointing out that each launch of the U.S. space shuttle cost \$400 to \$500 million.

Although the FGB design is based on the development of the Mir and earlier Soviet Salyut space stations, it boasts a number of innovations, notably a special shield to protect it from micro-meteorites, the Russian and U.S. space officials said.

New pipe and cable designs were also used in the FGB, providing better protection against corrosion than those installed on Mir, they said.

The U.S. shuttle endeavour is due to rendezvous with the FGB in July to deliver the second piece of the station — a U.S.-built connecting node.

Three spacewalks will be required to make the necessary electrical connections with the FGB, Nancy Currie, a member of the shuttle crew training for the mission, told AFP.